

A Loser's Lovestory In The 90s by elinastie

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Summary:

WARNINGS: vulgar language, references/hints to sexual acts (nothing too graphic, it is up to your imagination), violence, homophobia

1994 - Teenagehood brings The Losers strong unknown feelings and an urge to discover their sexualities. An innocent child's crush transforms into something greater than expected as the years pass by. Acceptance, love and a fear of being misunderstood are the key terms for Richie's and Eddie's ageing together.

(This is very vague, so basically, The Losers have become teenagers and are on a path to discover their feelings towards each other. Mainly Reddie with a hint of Benverly and Stenbrough.)

1. First Kiss

It was a cloudy afternoon in the early October of 1990. It looked as if it would start raining at any given moment. But it didn't, leaving a weird tension in the air. Bill, Richie and Eddie were sitting in Richie's warmly lit bedroom, each with a comic book in their hands.

Bill and Eddie were sitting on the carpet leaned against Richie's bed on which he was laying on his belly.

"Guys," Richie suddenly broke the silence. "Have you ever kissed someone?"

"Where the hell does that question come from?" Eddie asked putting his comic book down.

The boy shrugged. "They just kissed in my comic. Sooo, did you?"

Eddie shook his head. He was only thirteen, he didn't even think about such things.

"I d-did, but o-only Bev." Bill replied.

"I did too."

"Who?" He asked.

"A cute girl, what do you think?" Richie said mockingly.

"And w-w-what's her n-name?"

"I don't kiss and tell! I'm a gentleman."

Bill sighted and stood up. "I would tr-try to get it out of you, b-b-but I need to p-pee." Then he left the room to go to the bathroom.

Eddie had already continued reading and forgotten about the conversation when Richie spoke again.

"Psst, Eds."

"What?" Eddie looked up at his friend.

"I was lying, I've never kissed anyone."

"What? Why did you do that?"

"Because... I don't know. I don't wanted to seem like a desperate virgin in front of Billy-boy, I guess."

"You are a virgin!"

"But I'm not desperate."

"Right now you seem pretty desperate..."

"Whatever. It just came out of my mouth. As stuff usually just does."

Silence filled the air again. Again Eddie thought the conversation had come to an end.

"Eds?"

"Don't call me-"

"What if you help me make it less of a lie?" Richie asked shyly.

"What? How?"

"Let's kiss." Richie said looking dead serious.

"Very funny, asshole." Eddie replied looking back at his comic book.

"No, I mean it. Just so we can say we've kissed someone and so that when we have a real kiss it won't be so weird. We'll be prepared, y'know?."

"You're seriously not kidding?"

Richie shook his head and Eddie could tell that he wasn't joking.

"I don't know Rich... Isn't that what people get made fun of?"

"We are not gonna tell anyone who we kissed."

Eddie thought about it and put his comic aside. "Just to have done it?"

"Just to have done it."

"Okay.." he replied hesitantly and got up. "But if you tell anyone, you're dead." He sat onto the bed as Richie sat up, so that they were facing each other.

Richie closed his eyes.

"Does it work with glasses?"

"Eds."

"Okay, sorry."

Eddie closed the distance between them by leaning forward. He squinted his eyes and pressed his lips together into a thin line. Then he pressed them against Richie's for a split second.

"That's not how it works! I can kiss your mother better than that!"

Richie protested.

"Well, then you do it!" Eddie said in a sulky tone.

"I will!"

He cupped Eddie's cheeks which were turning a light pink shade. Again, Eddie squinted his eyes and pressed his lips together into a thin line.

"Don't do that with your mouth, you idiot. Leave it normal!"

Hesitantly Eddie did as told and opened one eye slightly. Richie then gently put their lips together for a few seconds. Then Eddie moved away.

"Kissing is weird." He said as he got off the bed.

"I bet it would be better with your mom."

"Beep-beep Richie!" He said grinning and hitting his friend with his comic book.

2. Camping and Alcohol

Notes for the Chapter:

additional warnings: homophobia, a not nice word to call gay people

Mike stopped his pick-up on on the empty parking spot. "From here on it's walking" he said as he grabbed his bag and jumped out of the car. Eddie and Stan who had been sitting next to him also got out with their luggage. The three walked around the pick-up. Richie had already stood up on the loading area. The other three losers were on their way of doing the same.

He called "I am ready for adventures!" and jumped off.

"Don't forget your b-bag Trashmouth!", Bill said and threw his friend's bag straight into his face. Then he proceeded to grab his own.

Everyone took their belongings and one other thing such as pieces of tents, food or drinks. All around them were trees and sun rays shining through them. From not far off the sound of flowing water was audible.

"Where to?" Ben asked and Eddie pointed in a direction.

"I'd say to the river." He looked at Bill as to get his approvement. His friend nodded and so they took off.

They found a clearing close to the river. There they dropped their baggage off. They began setting their three tents up and for awhile they were highly focused on doing it correctly so they remained silent apart from annoyed complaints and a few discussions here and there until they were finished.

"I'm going to go explore the area a bit" Richie informed the others getting out a packet of Winstons from the backpocket of his shorts. He lit a cigarette and then offered one to Beverly who took it thankfully. No one else wanted one.

"I-I'm guh-going with", Bill said. The five others also wanted to go

and so they all went together.

They walked around trying not to get lost, but everyone knew they couldn't with Eddie on their side. They walked along the river until Bev decided she wanted to get across it to the other side. Luckily enough stones stood out of the current making it easy to get over without getting wet feet. Beverly was followed by Bill and after him came Ben and then Richie. Eddie was last to set foot on the round stones. When he was close to the end of the improvised path he slipped and fell butt first into the river. For a moment it was quiet. Everyone looked at the boy sitting in the water, scared that he would become extremely annoyed and complain. No one knew what to say. Suddenly Eddie burst out laughing. After a few seconds everyone did so too and he got up. Beverly got to him to help him and together they got to the other side, joining their friends.

"Guys, I've had enough exploring for the day", Eddie said as the laughter was dying out. He looked at his soaking clothes. "I'm going back to the camp. I have to change into something dry. I don't want to get sick, my mom would kill me." He grinned and then turned and stepped into the river again, now not bothering to vicariously step only onto the stones but walking straight through the water. He stumbled to the other side labouriously and started heading towards their camp.

His fall had been funny, but now his wet sneakers began to annoy him. How were they going to dry any time soon?

"Hey! Wait on me Eds!" a voice behind him called. He turned around to see Richie getting over the river.

"We don't want you to get lost all alone" Richie said when he caught up with his friend. They continued walking.

"If anyone is getting lost it's the others." Richie laughed.

The camp was only a few minutes away. As soon as they arrived Eddie took off his shoes and socks. Then he got his bag and scrambled around in it. He found what he was looking for and got the small towel out.

"You brought a towel here?" Richie asked in surprise.

"Of course, towels are useful in many situations" the other replied absentmindedly as he stood up.

"I don't even know why I was so surprised about that."

"Well..." Eddie said awkwardly looking at his friend. "I'm going to get dry then." He got into a tent and closed it. Then he called "Don't look!"

"Now you temped me" Richie called back jockingly, his face turning red. He was glad the other couldn't see it.

After a minute of silence Eddie spoke again: "Uhm... Richie? Could you maybe give me the dry clothes from my bag?"

"Uh... Sure." Richie got to his knees and opened the rucksack. He looked around in it. First he spotted a pair of yellow shorts. He got them out. He continued searching for a shirt. As he was doing so he saw one of his friend's fresh underpants. He blushed and dug deeper. Then he realised that Eddie *needed* dry underwear, it is not like his did not get wet despite his shirt and trousers being soaked. He took the white piece of cloth out too, blushing deeper.

*What's your damn problem, man? You've been friends for ages. You're nearly an adult, there's really no need to be embarrassed by a pair of underpants.
(But I am.)*

"Richie?" a voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Yeah?"

"What's taking so long?" Eddie said popping his head through the tents opening.

"I can't find a shirt, senior."

"What? That can't be. Give me the bag." Richie did so. His friend grabbed it and disappeared in the tent again.

"Oh crap!" he called after a short moment. "I forgot to bring another one.

"Eddie Kasbprak, everyone: the guy who brings a fucking towel to a place where no showers were ever seen before but forgets to bring another shirt."

"I was mainly thinking about which medicine to bring considering all illnesses one can catch in a forest."

"Okay sure", Richie said. "Well, I'll get you one of my shirts." He opened the tent's zipper looking away. Eddie cried out in surprise and covered himself with the small towel.

"Chill, I'm not looking", his friend said and threw his pants and underwear into the tent. "Man, I've seen you naked plenty, don't make a fuss."

(But I myself am making a fuss, I could never see him naked now without...)

He stood up and got to his rucksack. Eddie climbed out of the tent in shorts and a naked upper body which he subconsciously tried to cover as best as possible.

He wasn't very successful.

Richie handed him a 'The Cure' band shirt which he put on quickly. The shirt was too big and was nearly below the rim of his rather short shorts.

He muttered a "thanks".

"No problem." On both of their faces a faint pink colour had spread and both looked away hoping the other wouldn't see. Luckily the five remaining Losers appeared in that instant.

"Oh Eddie, isn't that Richie's shirt?" Bev asked.

"Uhm, yes", the boy replied shyly looking at his bare feet.

"Would you believe he forgot a spare T-shirt?" Richie asked mockingly.

"No, but Richie's shirt looks cute on you too."

"Doesn't it?" Richie said. The two of them blushed deeper.

"Anyways" Beverly continued, "who else is hungry?"

They got a small fire going with Beverly's matches and began cooking the food they had. They ate around the fire and drank beer.

"And nooow..." Richie said when he placed his empty paper plate on the floor. He turned around and began scrambling for something in his bag. He got out three glass bottles. On two of them 'Vodka' was written on the front. On the third it was 'Gin'. He gave Ben who was sitting to his right one of the vodka bottles. "Pass them around Haystack!" he called. He was slightly tipsy from the four beers he had had so his voice was louder than usual.

"And this one," he began, holding up the gin bottle. "I bought specially for the cutest one in our group. Be a treasure and pass this to the lovely Eddie-boy, Beverly, sweetheart." He gave it to her. She was sitting to his left. She did as he had told her and winked at Eddie. "Beeb-beeb Richie", he mumbled looking at the ground and taking the bottle.

By now the air had gotten colder and everyone was wrapped in a blanket or already inside their sleeping bags.

"You are insane Trashmouth" Stan said, "we're not drinking this pure shit." He was holding a vodka bottle and looking at it mistrustingly.

"Oh, don't worry Stanley, Stan the Man. Bev?"

She grinned and held up soda bottles. "This is going to be fun."

"Let's play spin the bottle!" Beverly cried out. The sky was a dark shade of blue by now and all the losers were drunk and therefore had flushed cheeks. She was sitting on Bens lab. No one would've been

able to tell how she had gotten there. His face was of a high red colour but he had never looked happier. It was about one o'clock in the morning.

"You're the only girl, that's boring!" Stan said.

"You want to tell me that all of you are only into girls?" She giggled. "One out of ten people is homosexual so it is likely that one of you is! Also, where there is one homosexual person there are usually more." She took a drag from the cigarette resting between her fingers.

"Did you read a book on that?" Mike asked grinning.

She laughed. "It's the nineties, it's old news. You can tell aunt Bev, it will be our little secret. But there's nothing wrong with liking boys, so it doesn't need to be a secret."

"Y-you're drunk as shuh-shit" Bill said and laughed. Stan glanced at him.

"Okay, sooo, never have I ever?" she continued.

"That's better" Mike said. "Sooo, never have I ever... uhm, fantasized about kissing someone from the same gender" He said.

"Oh, c'mon! What's with all this gay stuff?" Stan complained.

"Sorry" Mike laughed. "But after Bev's speech..."

Bill drank. After him everyone else also did. It was his superpower, he made everyone gain courage. Eddie would never have taken a sip if Bill had not take one too. The only one who didn't drink was Ben.

"Uhm, is that something everyone does?" Ben asked grinning. "Why am I the weird one for not having done that?" Everyone laughed.

"You've never b-b-been curious?" Bill asked him.

Ben shrugged. "Nope."

"Guess we need to change our club name to The Faggs And Ben." Richie said laughing and then lighting a cigarette.

"Don't worry." Ben replied. "I'll try imagining it some day." Everyone laughed again.

"Never have I ever..." Bev said. "Kissed one of the losers." She took the red plastic cup which was placed in front of her and took a shot. Bill and Ben who had both kissed her did the same.

"Wow, you're just desperate to get drunk Bevvv" Mike giggled.

"I don't believe it." She said. Her cheeks were flushed from the alcohol she had already consumed. "I don't believe none of you have ever kissed someone from our group."

"We're all guys, wh-why w-would we?." Bill said in confusion, but shot a quick look at Stan.

"I don't know. Curiosity? Being drunk? Actually liking guys? Anyway, you guys have no other social contacts and get drunk together - something is bound to happen."

"None of us-" Stan began but Beverly interrupted him.

"Speak for yourself Stanley. We're not continuing until one of you drink."

"I think you've had enough alcohol, dear" Richie said grabbing her drink.

Eddie looked at him and then quickly back at his tennis socks he had been staring at since the question. He was blushing as he remembered the kiss he had had with Richie so many years ago. He hadn't really thought about it until now. He side eyed Richie to find out if he was going to drink. *It doesn't count*, he thought and wished he could telepathically send it to his friend sitting next to him. *Don't drink Richie, we said we wouldn't tell anyone.*

But Richie didn't hear Eddie's thoughts. His thin fingers were already closing around the cup. They had eye contact for a split second before Richie put it to his lips.

"I knew it!" Beverly said enthusiastically. "I have a special sense. But who is the lucky boy?"

Richie looked at the ground awkwardly. "Does it matter? We just kissed to have kissed someone when we were young and hadn't had a first kiss yet." He replied surprisingly serious. "If he doesn't want you to know then you don't need to know."

Somehow this convinced Eddie to hesitantly take a sip from his cup even though Bev would have probably given up after Richie's statement.

She smiled at Eddie fondly as to say that it wasn't something to be embarrassed about.

"We were twelve. We just wanted to see how it felt." He said shyly.

"Sorry guys, it's really none of my business."

No no no, she's getting the wrong idea, Eddie thought. The kiss had not meant anything at all. It had just been a dumb kid thing. He would never have repeated it. "No, but I'm not- not a... y'know what I mean."

"What? You can't even say the word?" Richie asked his friend with offended undertones.

"What?"

"It's the nineties Eddie, no need to be an ass anymore."

"What? Richie, no."

Richie stood up and grabbed his Winstons. "I need some fresh air" he said despite being outside. He disappeared into the dark.

"What just happened?" Ben asked after a few seconds.

"What did I say wrong?" Eddie asked. He looked at Beverly because he felt like she would be the one to know.

But she shrugged. "I guess you sounded a bit... intolerant? And maybe that disappointed him."

"Why? I just said I'm not... I don't have a problem with those who are

though."

"Are you sure? Sometimes it's subconscious-"

Eddie stood up. "I'm tired, where can I sleep?"

"In my tent" Beverly said. "I'm coming soon too."

"What was that all about?" Stanley asked in confusion.

She shrugged and followed Eddie with her eyes, a sad look on her face.

Soon they all left to go to sleep. Ben joined Richie in his tent and since Bill's was a bit bigger he shared it with Stanley and Mike.

Mike awoke an hour after he had fallen asleep. He sat up and looked at the other two boys next to him. Stan was half hugging Bill who had an arm around him.

I feel like I shouldn't be here, Mike thought smiling. He got out of the tent as quietly as possible.

"Bev?" he whispered in surprise when he saw the girl walking away from her tent in her pijamas.

"Oh, hi. I was just, uhm... going to pee."

"Ohh."

"What are you up to?"

"I think i should switch tent", he said grinning. "My roommates need some alone time." Beverly understood. There was always this certain energy between Bill and Stan. One might call it pining for each other, but no one would have dared to say such thing out loud.

"You can go to mine, but Richie will probably show up there soon."

"What?" he asked confused but she had already continued walking. Wondering he got to her tent. Before going in he turned around

again. The girl had opened the zipper to the third tent. Richie's tent. "Ohhh" he whispered to himself now understanding. Then he laid down next to the sleeping Eddie.

"Hey!" Beverly said when she opened Ben's tent. The two boys looked up.

"Oh, Bev! Coming to sweeten our nights?" Richie asked.

"Beeb-beeb Richie" she said smiling. Ben put an arm around her waist when she came in.

"I get it, I get it. I was already on my way out!" Richie said. He took his glasses, his cigarettes and matches and quickly got out of the tent. Outside he put his glasses on and lit a cigarette. It was nice and cool outside and he hoped no mosquitoes would attack his bare legs (he was in his underwear and a t-shirt).

Without really thinking about it he walked to Beverly's green tent. Then he remembered his unfinished argument with his best friend. He felt his chest ache. In that moment he wanted nothing else but to wake Eddie up, see his face and sit in the dark forest with him, the river and the stars.

If it was not for his internalised homophobia...

Why did your mother have to screw your pure soul up this way?

That was the thing though, he did not even blame Eddie for his intolerance. It was his damned mother...

He took a breath in and opened Beverly's tent. He was surprised to see Mike inside, but brushed it off. He shook Eddie's sleeping bag until the boy woke up.

"Huh? Is it morning already?" he said confused and half asleep.

"No. Want to smoke a cigarette with me?"

When Eddie realised it was Richie who had woken him up he lost all the weariness in an instant. He knew that Richie knew the answer to that question was always no, so he didn't bother to reply, but he did

get out of his sleeping bag and into his sneakers and joined his friend outside.

"Why is Mike in Bev's tent?" he asked Richie when he was standing next to him. He rubbed his eyes.

Cute!

"I don't know, but Beverly is in Ben's tent" he replied and took a drag from his cigarette.

"Wait, like...?"

He nodded.

"Oh."

"What? You thought she was going to make out with you tonight?" Richie asked, only half joking. A feeling of jealousy spread through him.

"No! It's obvious those two have something going on. She wouldn't like me."

"Do you *want* her to like you?" The feeling was getting stronger.

"No. Rich, I'm sorry for whatever I said before..." Eddie changed the topic.

"You don't even know what you said wrong."

"No, but I know I don't want you to be mad at me."

Richie laid an arm around his friend. "Don't worry Eds, you're just too pure for this word."

"Don't treat me like a baby!"

Richie pinched his cheek. "How could I not?"

"Fuck you. I hate you" Eddie replied but didn't even try to free himself from his friend's grip. They stood in silence for a few seconds.

A part of Eddie wanted to know what exactly he had done wrong. Another part subconsciously knew, but most of him just wanted to be in that exact moment with Richie's arm around him.

He broke the silence by sneezing and then cursing. "Crap, if I get sick now my mom will never allow me to leave the house after dark again..."

"We can't allow that to happen! So back to your tent Eddie-Spaghetti."

"I'm going to fucking kill you."

Richie messed his friend's hair up with his hand and let go of him.

3. Freddie Mercury

They left their camp in the evening of the following day – the last day of summer vacation. Matching the Losers' gloomy moods the sky was filled with grey clouds when they arrived home. Richie decided to take a walk as means of procrastination for getting ready for the school day. It would soon rain and then he would be forced to do it anyways, so why not put it off for a little longer.

He was already on his second cigarette when he passed the kissing bridge. He looked around instinctively and seeing no one around he approached the fence of the bridge.

It was still there.

The initials R + E carved into the wood.

He had carved them into the bridge a few years ago as a child. Seeing them caused him to remember his "first kiss" with Eddie which had been at around the same period of time as the creation of the carving. It made him smile and he got a weird sense of nostalgia and a feeling of great distance to his childhood. As a child he had not really understood his feelings for his friend. He had just known he loved making him laugh and he loved his company...

Had anything changed?

Yes, they were a few years older. And that just made it that much more complicated. He still had a special bond with Eddie, but it felt different now. For a second he considered re-carving the initials, but that would have just made his feelings more real and in that moment all he wanted was for them to go away.

Eddie had actually been preparing his school bag for tomorrow, but as he had looked under his bed searching for his history book he had found his vinyl collection and had gotten distracted from his original task by looking through them. He had gotten all of them from his friends, most were from Richie. He never played them because his mother would be terrified by simply knowing he liked this type of music. Basically *that* type of music that was not classical music. But that was okay, he liked just knowing he had them and he liked

imagining that one day, when he no longer lived at home, he could play them as much as he wanted to.

A Queen album gifted to him by Richie caught his attention. It sparked a very specific memory. It was the day Freddie Mercury, the singer of Queen, had died in 1991. His mother had been watching the news in TV when his death and cause of death was broadcasted all over the USA. Young Eddie did not care too much. He had been taking his daily medicine in the kitchen as he heard his mother rambling to herself about Freddie Mercury, his death, the cause.

"Eddie-bear?" she had suddenly called.

He had finished taking his medicine quickly and gone into the living room.

"What is it ma'?" he had asked.

"This singer just died because of... the way he lived. He liked men y'know? Not woman like god intended it to be. Eddie-bear, you need to stay away from such people. They will make you sick. Do you understand?"

Young Eddie nodded, even though he did not in fact understand. He just heard liking men, sick and death and that was enough.

"Oh no, don't worry, my baby. I will always protect you" his mother said after noticing his terrified expression. She hugged him.

In that instant he had remembered the kiss with Richie and his heart rate accelerated. Did that mean that kiss could have killed him? Could it *still* kill him? Was he ill already? He felt sick. He ran to his room and took several drags from his inhalator and started crying.

"How did I never question her..." Eddie whispered to himself. Then he realised tears were running down his face and falling onto the album. He quickly put it back with the other vinyls and dried his tears.

Before his mother had said that to him the thought of the kiss had always made his stomach feel ticklish, afterwards it just made him feel sick and scared.

He felt anger boiling up inside of him. Hatred towards his mother. The woman who was constantly manipulating him with fear of the outside world without him realising or resisting her. He always believed all the bullshit that came out of her mouth. And now he was nearly an adult and not much had changed. "Time to think for myself" he whispered and put the vinyls back under his bed.

The next day, he told himself, he would go to the library and make some research on how Freddie Mercury had actually died and everything related to his death.

"Do y-you guys wh-want to c-come to my house?" Bill asked as he and the other Losers left school grounds on Monday. "We can play v-video games."

"Sure" Ben replied. "But I need to get my homework done first."

"Yeah, me too" Mike said.

"Okay, so in an hour at my-my house?"

"Uhm, I might take a bit longer" Eddie said considering the research he wanted to make.

"O-okay." Bill swung a leg over his bike. "S-see you later then."

Eddie headed straight to the library. He wanted to get his homework done first to get it over with, but his curiosity was too great now that the computer was so close to him.

He hesitated before clicking on 'search' after having typed in 'Freddie Mercury cause of death'. Could the librarian see what he was looking for? What would they think? He looked around nervously and then just clicked on the button with closed eyes.

Absorbed into his research Eddie did not notice how much time was passing. Neither did he notice someone approaching him.

"Other people would also like to use the computer, young man."

Eddie flinched and quickly closed the open tab. He turned around to face the librarian. He mumbled an apology and got up. He quickly got all his things together and left the library without having done his homework. But he did not mind in that moment. He felt free.

I can make my own research. My mother doesn't control what I know and think. I am my own person.

Eddie's smile didn't leave for the rest of the day. He cycled from the library to Bill's house. He was the last one to arrive.

As the other ones were taking turns on playing with Bill's console Eddie was doing his homework on the sofa.

"How did you take so long to get here and didn't even finish your homework?" Richie asked sitting down next to his friend after his

turn. Eddie felt their arms against each other. His heart beat faster.

"I was, uhm... researching at the library."

"For fun?" the other asked bewildered.

Eddie shrugged. "To expand my knowledge on certain topics."

"Now you just sound like Ben, what happened to you?"

"Whatever, trashmouth." He hit Richie with his notebook.

"You love me" Richie said grinning while putting his arms around his neck.

"I hate you."

"You dont."

"I really do."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, very."

Richie started tickling Eddie's side.

"Do you still hate me?"

"I hate you more than ever!" Eddie giggled and hit his friend with his notebook a few times. He then gave up on it and tried pushing him away. "You fucking asshole!"

Richie tickled him more intensely. While Eddie was leaning away he ended up half lying on the sofa with Richie tickling his belly with one hand and his other resting next to Eddie's head holding his weight.

"You love me Eds."

"Don't call me-" he began, but laughed so hard he couldn't finish the sentence.

"Get a room tou two!" Stanley called.

Eddie's face that had already turned pink now turned into a darker shade.

"You'll be the next, Stanley!" Richie called back. He stopped ticking Eddie but still stayed in the same position for a few seconds. Eddie looked up at him, his stomach feeling as if someone had shaken it.

"I will stab you if you get close to me."

Richie leant away and sat back normally.

Eddie resumed his homework, but found it very hard to concentrate with Richie sitting next to him.

Richie whose face had just been so close to his own.

Richie leaning over him...

"I-I need to go to the bathroom." Eddie mumbled and left the room.

Richie followed him with his eyes.

Why did you just do that? That totally defeated your purpose to reduce those feelings.

I just can't stop myself, huh?

Maybe I should just go home.

When Eddie returned from the bathroom Richie was gone. The other Losers were all staring at the television display. Eddie asked them where Richie was.

"He just left a second ago" Ben replied.

"Why?"

"Don't know."

Eddie jogged to the front door and when he opened it Richie was just jumping onto his bicycle.

"Rich, wait!"

"What's up, Eddie-boy?"

"I just wanted to apologise... for the camping thing."

"Didn't you already do that?"

"Yes, but for real now. My mom really fucked me up, basically told me homosexuality kills people."

"She's really something, huh?"

"I'm serious, Rich. I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Eddie-bear."

"I'm gonna fucking kill you."

Richie started pedaling very fast. "See you tomorrow, Eddie-Spaghetti!" he shouted while riding away.

"What an idiot" Eddie whispered to himself and smiled.

4. Doodles and Punches

Eddie was feeling great. He finally felt like his mother did not control everything he did anymore and he and Richie made up.

Richie.

As he had been trying to fall asleep the night before Richie had dominated his thoughts. And when he had finally fallen asleep his dreams too. He did not remember what his dream had been about exactly, but his friend had been part of it.

Eddie looked at himself in the mirror in the hallway.

What did it mean?

Nothing, probably.

Right?

He got his school bag and left the house. His third period was biology. As time was passing Eddie's concentration faded more and more.

Ten minutes before the end of the lesson he had completely stopped listening and his mind had gone blank. By the end of the lesson he had filled an entire page of his notebook with scribbles and doodles. The ringing of the schoolbell brought him back to reality.

He starred at the page in front of him.

"Oh fuck!" he whispered to himself when he saw what he had just written in the corner of the page.

"Richie."

But the worst thing was the heart around to the name.

"Shit, shit, shit!"

Eddie ripped the page out.

"You okay there?"

Eddie flinched and looked up at Mike who was standing in front of his desk.

"Yeah, uhm... it's all good" he replied putting the piece of paper carelessly into his bag together with his notebook and biology book.

"If you say so."

Together they walked to their lockers where the rest of the Losers were waiting for them.

"Hey guys!" Beverly said when they arrived. "I just asked the others if they wanted to join me in the park for a cigarette."

Richie will probably come with.

So what? I don't care.

"Sure" Eddie replied instinctively.

"I need to get some homework done, I have no free period today, but next time."

"Same w-with me" Bill said and Staley also denied the offer. As Eddie had guesses Richie joined Beverly and so did Ben.

Richie and Beverly sat onto the back of the bench when they arrived in the park. Eddie sat next to him and Ben next to her.

Eddie watched Richie light his cigarette.

How would it taste to kiss a smoker?

Always these damned thoughts coming from nowhere. He looked away again.

Shut up brain.

Richie and Beverly began talking about some band they both liked which the other two never listened to.

How can I get his attention?

I don't need his attention.

I still want it though...

"Can I have a drag?" Eddie asked without thinking about it. Everyone looked at him in disbelief.

Richie handed him his cigarette. "Are you sure? That is really not good for your health."

"No shit, asshole" Eddie responded and took a furious drag. As expected he started coughing even though he did his best not to, but that just made it worse forcing him to stand up.

Richie jumped off the bench and got to his friend. "If you feel like puking..."

"No, no... I'm fine" Eddie replied, his hands still on his knees.

Richie layed an arm around him when he had stopped coughing.

"You better?"

"Yeah..." Eddie stood upright and Richie stroked his back. He took a drag from his inhalator, partly because of the caughing, partly because of his friend's hand on his back.

The hand wandered up to his shoulder. "Why did you do that?"

"I don't know, I guess I was curious." he replied looking up at Richie who was looking at him.

"If you're gonna kiss I'm gonna puke all over you."

The two boys looked to the guy who had just spoken. He stood in front of them. They recognised him. He was from their school, one class above them.

"I was just caughing-" Eddie began.

Beverly and Ben appeared next to their friends. "Is everything okay, guys?" she asked.

"If you can stop your friends from being disgusting fags, everything's fine" the oldest replied with a moicking smile.

"You don't even know our fucking names, what's your deal? Leave us alone" she said.

"I don't tolerate fags in my town."

"This is not your fucking town" Richie said stepping closer.

"Oh, so you're not the denying the fag part?"

"What if I'm not?" he asked stepping even closer.

"Don't get close to me, you disgusting piece of shit!" the bully said and pushed Richie away. He was nearly a head taller than him. Richie tumbled back and fell onto his butt.

"Richie!" Eddie cried out and all of his friends got to his side, "are you okay?"

Richie didn't respond but jumped to his feet again, he ran towards the boy and pushed him too. "Just leave us alone, what's your problem? Are you braindamaged?"

"Don't fucking touch me, fag!"

"Do you maybe have a more creative insult?"

The boy glared at Richie and after a second of consideration he grabbe his shirt and punched him in the face.

"Richie!" Eddie cried out again.

"Get off him!" Ben said and stood next to Richie.

"Or what, fatty?"

"Counting probably isn't your thing, so since you didn't notice: it's four against one, fuckface" Beverly said stepping next to the others too.

The bully glared from one Loser to the other. He pointed at Richie an Eddie in a threatening way. "If I see you being faggots ever again..." he said and leaving the phrase unfinished he left.

Eddie ran to Richie who's nose had begun bleeding. "Oh god, Rich. Are you okay?"

"It's not too bad actually" he replied putting his fingers to his nose and the inspecting the blood on them afterwards. He walked to the bench and sat down.

Eddie sat next to him. "Wait." He scrambled around in his fanny pack. "What a fucking asshole. Why do people always think someone else's life is their business?" Beverly said disgusted. She stroked Richie's arm.

"We should get you to the school nurse."

"Nah. It's not that bad, Haystack. Besides, the nurse would just ask stupid questions. Eddie can fix me up" Richie replied grinning. He winked at Eddie who blushed immediately.

Eddie got a tissue from his fanny pack. "Hold still."

"Yes, mom."

He grabbed his friend's face gently with one hand and with the other he carefully dabbed the blood away with the tissue. Richie stared at his concentrated face.

"What?"

"Nothing. I need to look somewhere, right?"

"Of course..." Eddie replied and took his water bottle from his school bag. He opened it and wet the tissue. Then he got the last remains of blood out of Richie's face with it.

"I'm surprised you didn't use your spit for that like your mom would."

"Beep-beep." He threw the tissue into the bin. "Rich, I can't really do a lot more. If it hurts a lot I got painkillers, otherwise a cool pad would be good, but I don't happen to carry one around."

"No need, it's all good now. Actually... maybe a kiss to heal it completely."

"Beep-beep, trashmouth. Let's get back to school then." Eddie stooped up.

"Missed opportunity, is all I'm saying, dear" Richie said and put his arm around Eddie.

The others laughed and they walked back to school.

5. Movie Night

Friday evening the Losers had all gathered at the Denbrough house. Bill's parents had left for the weekend so he had invited his friends over to stay for the night. It was raining heavily and all of them were sitting in the living room watching the movie 'Edward Scissorhands'. They were already slightly tipsy from the beer they had drunken.

"She's cute. Looks very similar to my first girlfriend!" Richie was just saying pointing at the main female character played by Winona Ryder.

"Your first and the only one you ever had" Stanley replied.

"B-but its tr-true, she-she does" Bill responded.

"Shush guys!" Beverly said.

"Yeah, the only one because I still haven't recovered from the heartbreak" Richie said dramatically. "She made me a better man and then tore my heart out." His voice was now morphing into a bad English accent.

"Wasn't that before we got to know each other?" Mike asked.

"Yeah, why?"

"So you were like, around the age of, what? Ten?"

"That doesn't make it less painful."

The others laughed.

"It's not like you guys have much going on either though."

"Pretty sure we all managed to have relationships that lasted over a week, so at least still better than you" Stan said looking at the screen.

"Pffft. You don't know what happens at all those parties me and Bevvie go to."

"And w-we d-don't want to."

"Your loss."

Eddie stood up and left the room mumbling something about getting a glass of water.

"That's a good idea" Richie said getting to his feet too.

"You're just trying to get out of this conversation" Ben grinned.

"I'm not gonna deny that, Haystack."

And with that said Richie followed his friend into the kitchen.

"You okay over there, Eds?" he asked him leaning against the counter with his back.

"Yeah, just thirsty."

"Oh. Okay, because you seemed pretty uncomfortable..."

"It's nothing, just..." Eddie sighted. "That whole relationship talk. Like, I'm seventeen and I've never really gotten far with romantic stuff and less with... you know, sexual stuff..."

"Don't you know about all those diseases that spread from kissing?" Richie asked mockingly.

"Fuck off" Eddie said but giggled. He pushed his friend jokingly. Then looked into his eyes with a half smile. "I'm serious."

Richie stared back. After a quiet few seconds he turned away towards the sink and said, "what do you want me to answer, Eds?" He filled a glass of water for himself too.

"Nothing, it's impossible to be serious with you."

There was a weird tension in the air which both could feel.

"I'm sorry" Richie whispered.

"Let's go back to the others" Eddie said and took off. Richie followed him.

They sat next to each other in front of the sofa.

When the movie ended Richie got up and stretched. "I'm going out for a smoke. Wanna come with me Eds?"

"It's cold and damp outside."

"Then take a blanket."

Eddie sighted and grabbed a blanket after asking Bill if he could. Then he followed Richie onto the veranda.

They sat in front of the door where the rain could not hit them and Richie lit his cigarette with his matches.

"I've not gotten very far either by the way."

"What?"

"I'm not repeating it" he said staring into the backyard.

Eddie wrapped the blanket around his shoulders and looked to the front too. They sat there for a while in comfortable silence, listening to the rain.

Suddenly Richie felt something touching his hand. At first he thought it was an insect and he was about to pull his hand away, but then he realised it were Eddie's fingers. Two of *Eddie's* thin fingers were on *his* hand. He looked at his friend in surprise, but his eyes were not moving away from the backyard and his head was slightly turned away from Richie.

Richie moved his fingers to grab his and then turned his hand around to grab his hand. He squeezed it gently.

Both of their hearts began pounding quicker.

"Eddie?" Richie broke the silence. He put his cigarette out.

"Hm?" Eddie asked shyly and looked at his friend.

"I can be serious if you need me to" Richie whispered.

"You know you can't" Eddie said smiling.

Richie leaned toward Eddie slowly. His left hand supporting him as the right moved to cup his friend's cheek. Then he hesitantly moved closer to him and linked their lips.

After a second he moved away and whispered: "Completely serious."

Eddie didn't know what was happening. Breathing became harder causing him to have the urge to get his inhalator, but he managed to resist the urge.

"Sure?" he asked, his voice breaking.

"Yes."

"Then do it again, coward", he said grinning.

What did I just say? Who's saying this? Since when-

"You sure you don't mind the germs?"

He shook his head.

Richie joined their lips again and then moved his against Eddie's. Eddie opened his eyes in surprise for a moment. He closed them again and tried to imitate Richie's movements until they were in sync.

Richie's hands moved down to his waist and he felt his blood pulsating through his body, it was a nice feeling. Eddie placed his hands on Richie's shoulders.

When they separated Richie said "we need to repeat this."

Eddie stared at him. Richie gave him another short kiss and then stood up. He held his hand out to help him up. "But now we should get back inside before we catch a cold or the others begin wondering what were up to."

Eddie took his hand and got up. "I didn't- It's not because I'm drunk."

"Not because of me being drunk either, darling."

"What's wrong then?"

"Nothing, I just thought we could take it slow and make it work", Richie replied brushing out a strand of hair from Eddie's face.

"Wow."

"What?"

"You're... not joking."

"I like you, Eds."

"Don't call me-"

Eddie was interrupted by Richie's lips pressing against his.

"I like you too, Rich" he said smiling after the kiss.

See, ma? I can kiss a boy without getting sick and dying. And I will do it again, as often as I can, ha!

Richie pinched Eddie's cheek and then they entered the house again to join their friends for the second movie.

They sat next to each other again, but now Richie grabbed Eddie's hand under the blanket.

Eddie felt his stomach turn, but in a very nice way. He had no idea what happened in the second movie.

After the third movie everyone was tired so they got into their sleeping bags in Bill's room. Eddie's sleeping bag was not far away from Richie's.

"Richie?" he whispered so that only the other could hear.

"Yes?"

"Is this... wrong?"

"Does it feel wrong?" Richie asked.

"No. But my mother says it is. Don't your parents say that too? Their bible say so, right?"

"I don't know. But I know that god loves everyone, as long as you don't kill people, I guess. Why would it matter to him who you like? Also god might not even exist, so who's he to make up dumb rules?"

That answer satisfied Eddie and he closed his eyes with a smile on his lips.

6. Pillow Fight

The next day Richie was the last one to wake up. Weak sunrays were filling the room. As he slowly opened his eyes he soon realised his head was aching. After he sat up and found the room to be deserted he let himself fall onto his pillow again.

"Ugh" He said as he buried his face in his hands. "I want to sleep all day." He grumbled and closed his eyes.

"Finally, you're awake."

"Huh?" Richie opened his eyes again and sat up.

Mike had come into the room.

"We're all downstairs if you want to join. We're making breakfast." He said. After a look at his watch he added: "Or better brunch."

Richie looked at Bill's clock. It was twenty past twelve.

Mike shrugged. "If you want to call it lunch..."

"I'm coming in a moment."

He gave him a nod and took a pair of white socks out of his bag. After putting them on he left again and Richie got out of his sleeping-bag. He was wearing yesterday's shirt and boxersshorts. He quickly got into his jeans and put his glasses on and then jogged to the kitchen.

Everyone was there and gave him a good morning greeting.

"Can hardly call it morning." He replied. He looked at what the others were cooking.

Ben was making eggs, Stan was cutting tomatoes, Beverly was standing next to the toaster waiting for the bread and the others were making the table.

"This looks delicious, guys. But I feel way too sick to eat it." Richie said and took a piece of white toast. He bit into it.

"You p-probably got the w-worst hh-hangover out of all of us." Bill stated as he was putting milk on the table.

Richie shrugged.

"Do you even remember much?"

"Most actually." He replied to Stan's question with a full mouth. "At least I think so." His eyes wandered to Eddie and stayed on him briefly. He was setting the table and Richie noticed that he was avoiding eye contact with him. He ignored that fact and looked over Ben's shoulder.

"You can cook? What can you not do? You're real husband material,

Haystack" he said putting his hands on his shoulders. "Bevvy, how haven't you married him yet?"

"I ask myself that too."

Ben's face turned bright red. Richie sat down at the table, a satisfied grin on his face.

Everyone else sat down too and they began eating. When they were finished Eddie was the first to stand up.

"Guys I'm sorry, but I should get going home. My-"

"Mom, we know. D-don't whu-worry Eddie. See you on Monday" Bill interrupted him.

Eddie smiled at him thankfully and then went back into his room to get his bag. As he was putting his pyjama into it, the door behind him opened.

"Eddie-boy!"

He flinched. "Fuck, Rich. Don't scare me like that!"

Richie sat onto the floor next to his friend.

"Why are you avoiding me?"

"I'm not" Eddie replied staring at his bag.

"You're not even looking at me right now."

Eddie turned to face him. "I just didn't want to raise suspicion."

"Then treat me like you always did. That's less suspicious."

"But that's hard..."

"I know. We'll tell them eventually..." Richie said putting his hand on his friend's cheek.

"For now a little secret is nice too though" Eddie said smiling. He put his hand on top of the other's and leaned forward to kiss him.

"I'm not complaining" Richie said grinning and kissed him again.

"Someone might come in..."

Richie fell onto his back and groaned.

"Why couldn't I like a girl?"

"Because no girl would ever take you."

"You...!" Richie cried. He grabbed a pillow and smacked it into Eddie's face.

Eddie fell back and got a pillow too. He hit Richie back and both started giggling. They began having a pillow fight.

"Uhm... guys?" a voice suddenly said.

Both flinched and looked at the door from where the voice had come from. Beverly stood in the frame.

"Oh, hi" Richie said pushing his glasses up which had slid down his nose during the fight.

"We were just wondering what you were up to, since Eddie wanted to leave..."

"Yes. I was just about to." Eddie took his bag and stood up.

"I'll bring you home" Richie said standing up too.

That is suspicious, idiot. But denying the offer would be more suspicious...

Eddie walked past Bev and left the room followed by Richie.

The said goodbye to the other Losers and left.

"We shouldn't be together every chance we get, Richie. The others will-" Eddie began as they started walking.

"Get suspicious, I know, I know. Just let me have it today. Not even a day has passed since the first kiss. Don't sweat it" Richie interrupted pinching his cheek.

"Technically it has been four years" Eddie said smiling.

"And no one has noticed anything since then, so don't worry."

"You're right. Sorry, I guess I'm just... scared."

Richie didn't know what to answer. *Don't be scared. It's gonna be okay.*

But that would be a lie. If they would show affection in public chances were they would get insulted or beaten up. It's really fucking unfair, but is is how it is...

So he stayed silent and brushed his hand against his friend's as they were walking.

We're the only ones on this street. What are the chances of someone looking out the window now? Eddie thought to himself and slung two of his slim fingers around two of Richie's. They smiled at each other while they were walking.

When they were close to the Kaspbrak home Eddie pulled his hand away. They stopped and turned to face each other.

"Goodbye, Rich."

"Goodbye, Eds" Richie said and held his hand out. Eddie grinned and took it. They shook hands and then Eddie walked the last few meters to his house. At the front door he turned around once more to smile at Richie who was still standing on the same spot and looking at him. He smiled back and his friend disappeared behind the door.

7. Bruises and Band-aids

Eddie was woken up by the sound of something hitting glass. In his sleepy state it took him a while to locate where the sound was coming from.

The window.

Obviously.

Something was hitting his window. Probably small rocks.

"What the..." he whispered to himself. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

Oh God, what if it's a burglar.

Why would he throw stones at your window?

He tiptoed to his window and carefully looked outside. His heart rate increased rapidly within a second. Someone was standing in front of the house looking up at him in the middle of the night. He could only make out a silhouette.

He opened the window. "What the hell are you doing here?" he whispered as loud as possible.

"Uhm... I kinda need help."

"What happened?"

"The guy from the park from two weeks ago... he kinda got me when I was alone."

"What? Richie, do you mean-"

"I got beaten up, yes."

"Oh fuck, oh shit!" Eddie whispered. "Wait a second."

His mother had gone to bed already so he walked downstairs on his tiptoes trying not to wake her up. He quietly opened the front door.

"Oh fuck, Richie."

His friend had a bleeding nose again, but apart from that also abrasions on his elbows and a cut on the cheek and on his bottom lip.

"Yeah, it's not pretty" Richie said seeing Eddie's shocked expression.

"That's why I didn't wanna go home like this and your house was closer..."

"Come in already."

Eddie walked to the bathroom with him. When they were inside he locked the door and then turned a dim lighting on.

First he cleaned all the blood from the wounds away as Richie watched his concentrated eyes, the slight frown on his face, the freckles on his nose...

He's so beautiful.

He then opened a cupboard that was filled with medicine of all sorts. He scrambled some of it together.

"I know this is gonna be extremely hard for you, but you're gonna need to be quiet or my mother will make you look worse than this."

"I'll give my best, Eddie-bear."

"Sooo, this is gonna hurt so bite a towel or something."

"I think I can stand it. You know I'm manly like no one else."

"You really aren't."

"Yeah... maybe not-ow!"

"Pssht! I fucking told you-"

"Sorry, sorry."

Eddie had put disinfectant on the wounds on his arms. When the disinfectant touched the cut on his cheek Richie grabbed Eddie's arm in a reflex and flinched.

"It's nearly over."

"You should become a nurse or something."

Eddie grinned.

"No, for real!"

Eddie turned away and got plasters.

"Shut up, I need to put one on your lip" Eddie said blushing.

He carefully put a little plaster on Richie's bottom lip who's cheeks were also turning pink. Then he put a plasters on the remaining wounds.

"Thank you, Eds."

"No problem. We don't want to worry your parents. Does it hurt a lot?"

I'm sure they wouldn't worry too much...

"No, it's fine. I'm sorry for just coming here and expecting you to take care of me."

"I could've just ignored you if it annoyed me."

"But you didn't."

"No, I didn't. Of course not. You got beaten up because of me."

"Because of you?"

"You know, I smoked, caughed, you put an arm around me" Eddie said and looked to the side shyly, "the guy thought you were gay and punched you. All because I smoked, basically."

Richie thought about it for a second and then said "It's only his fault for being an ass, what about that?" putting his hand on his shoulder.

Eddie smiled. "Yeah, I guess that's true."

The hand wandered up to his cheek.

"Can I kiss you?"

"Why are you asking?"

"Because there's a disgusting germ filled cut on my lip."

"Can't be worse than your mouth" Eddie grinned and lent forward to link his lips to Richie's while his hand wandered through his brown hair and stopped at the back of his head.

When they separated Eddie turned away and opened the door as quietly as possible, he looked around and left the room followed by Richie. They walked to the kitchen where Eddie opened the freezer and took out cool aid.

"That's not necessary, Eds. We got that at home, I'll just-"

"No. You need to use it now if you don't want to get a big dark bruise on your cheek."

"Oh, okay. Thanks."

Eddie walked upstairs followed by his friend. They walked into his room. When they were inside Eddie locked the door with a self attached lock that had caused a great discussion with his mother.

"Oh wow, *you* have a lock?"

"Yeah, my mother nearly killed me for it" he said smiling.

"I can imagine" Richie replied letting himself fall onto the bed. "She's a very special woman."

"Fuck you" Eddie replied sitting down next to his friend. He watched him stare at the ceiling. After a few seconds he turned his head and looked at his him.

"My cheek is freezing off" Richie said.

Eddie grinned and laid down next to him.

"Put a piece of the blanket between your cheek and the cool pad."

"What would I do without you, Eddie-Spaghettie?"

"Die, probably and if you continue calling me that way you'll die in this reality too."

He looked at him grinning.

Stay.

I don't want you to leave tonight.

"How long do I have to do this for?"

"I dont know."

Silence filled the room, but it was the comfortable kind.

Richie turned to lay on his side to face Eddie. Eddie turned his head to look at him.

"Did I ever tell you you're cute as hell?" Richie asked

"Yes. Even before the kiss."

"That's true. But now I mean it on a romantic level."

Eddie smiled. "Thanks, I suppose. You're good looking."

"I know."

"Fuck you" he said laughing.

When the laughter had died out Richie put his hand on his cheek and stroked his hair with his fingers.

"Is it worth it?" Eddie asked, his expression changing into a worried one.

"What?"

"Getting beaten up because of... us."

"Even if we weren't a thing, I would still be who I am. They would still punch me so I might as well take the chance and be able to kiss the cutest boy on earth while I'm on this ride. I'm just scared you'll get hurt... That wouldn't be worth it."

"It would."

Richie leaned towards the other and kissed him.

When their lips parted he remained in the same position, his arm holding his head up, the other hand in Eddie's hair.

"This shitty town is fucked up. As soon as I finish school I'm gonna get the fuck away. And I'm forcing you to leave too, even if it's not with me" Richie said.

"I'll come with voluntarily."

"That's a relief" he replied grinning and gave Eddie a short kiss again.

"Can you stay here tonight? And I don't know, jump out the window before ma wakes up or something."

"Sure" he responded. He put his hand on Eddie's waist and pressed his lips against his softly. Eddie felt his heart rate accelerate from the touch. He cupped Richie's cheeks.

"We've got school tomorrow we should..." Eddie began when they separated after a while. Richie gave him a nod.

Eddie sat up and got under the blanket. He turned the light off and gave Richie a short kiss of good night. They fell asleep after a few minutes, Richie's arm around Eddie's waist.

8. Studying and Hammocks

Eddie was woken up by the ringing of his alarm. He sat up quickly and looked to his right where Richie was laying who was slowly opening his eyes. Then he looked to his left at his alarm clock.

"Oh shit, oh fuck!" he whispered and jumped out of the bed.

"What is it?" Richie asked wearily turning onto his back.

"It's six already, my mom is awake. You need to get out!"

Richie got out of bed and put his sweater on.

"In sorry, but you'll have to get out through the window" Eddie said opening the window.

Richie slung his arms around his waist from behind and kissed his neck.

"See you later, babe" he said letting go.

"Be careful."

"Dont worry, I've jumped out a lot of windows" he replied and got into the frame.

"No, I mean be careful that she doesn't see you."

"Wow, I feel loved."

"Get out already" Eddie said cupping his face. He kissed him.

"You're making it very hard, babe" Richie responded grinning. He got out the window, climbed down the side of the house and let himself fall onto the grass. He looked up at Eddie again and waved at him before walking away.

Babe...

Did he just...

...call me babe...

Babe. Babe. Babe.

Oh my god.

Eddie smiled to himself and closed the window.

"Eddie-bear!" the voice of his mother tore him away from his thoughts and threw him back into reality.

"Yes, I'm getting dressed!" Eddie shouted back at her and opening the lock on his door.

Richie went home, changed his outfit and brushed his teeth. His parents had not noticed his absence, or if they had they did not care

about it. When he was ready he left for school.

When approaching the school steps he spotted a familiar head. "Stan. Stan, the man!" he said putting an arm around his friend.

"What's up trashmo- what the hell happened to your face?"

"Henry Bowers wasn't the only asshole at this school."

"That's true... Have you studied for math yet?" Stanley asked as they entered the school.

"Nah, we still have three days until the test."

"So, you'll start tomorrow at eleven PM?"

"You really get me, dear."

They arrived at their lockers where Eddie and and Bill were already standing talking to each other.

"Hey, Billy-boy, Eds" Richie said when they joined them. Eddie blushed when he saw him.

Babe.

"G-guys, whu-we were just talking about the math t-test-"

"You too, Billy? You've disappointed me" Richie said leaning against the lockers.

"O-okay, you're off the list. C-could you study wh-whith us S-stan? I know yuh-you d-don't have the test, but you're still better than us."

"Sure."

"Eddie let's get away from these nerds" Richie said putting an arm around Eddie and pulling him with him.

"You're the one who gets an A at the end. Besides that I'm also gonna study with them, you know?" Eddie said blushing deeper.

"You get a second chance."

"Richie we're in public, don't do that arm thing..."

"But I always did that" he said letting go of his friend.

"Yeah, but now... it's different."

"Little flustered baby."

"Richie!" Eddie said angrily. He sighted. "Let's get to class already."

They entered their english class room and sat down on their usual seats next to each other.

In the middle of the class Richie tapped his friend on the shoulder and when he turned to him he gave him a note. It read "wanna hang out after school?" Eddie replied: "I told you I'm studying with Bill and Stan"

"Maybe you should leave those two alone, if you know what I mean" Richie told Eddie after class.

"But if we hang out we're gonna study."

"Lame... but if that's the condition."

When school finished Richie told his friend he had an idea where to go to. Eddie following his lead they began walking towards the creek and down to the barrens.

"I dont really remember where exactly..." he mumbled as they were walking past the trees.

"Oh, our old clubhouse."

"Yep."

After a while they found the clearing and saw that the trapdoor was open.

"What the..."

They slowly approached the hole in the ground as fear spread through their bodies.

"H-hello?" Richie asked when they were close enough.

Suddenly two heads popped up through the hole.

"You scared the shit out of us!" Eddie called when he recognised Bill and Stanley.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

"We're studying" Stan replied. "What about you guys?"

"We also wanted to study here..." Eddie said.

A short awkward silence fell over the four.

"Uhm so, sh-should we all study together th-then?" Bill asked looking from one friend to the other.

"Do we even all fit in there anymore?"

"As if you grew that much, Trashmouth" Stan replied. He got out of the hole. "But I'm going home, you have your fun down there. I've seen enough spiders for the day."

"B-but you were in the muh-middle of explaining suh-something."

Stan shrugged. "You can come with me and we can continue."

"S-sure."

"What about you?" he asked turning towards the other two.

"We wanted to visit the club house. Maybe we'll come by later?"

Richie replied.

"O-okay"

Stanley and Bill left while Richie helped Eddie climb down into the hole. He followed.

"Wow. How did we all fit in here?" Eddie asked looking around the

small space.

The clubhouse was about 2x2 meters wide and the ceiling was a little higher than 1.60 meters so that the two friends had to crouch.

"The hammock is still here!" Richie noticed and sat onto it.

"Remember how you didn't want to get off it so I just squeezed in when I wanted to use it?"

"And then we got used to it and always sat in it together" Richie grinned. "Being an annoying little bitch gets you what you want apparently."

"I am the annoying bitch?" Eddie asked offended and then laughed. The same way he used to do it as a child he tried to get onto the hammock too.

"Your fat ass is gonna break it!"

Somehow it actually worked and the two ended up half sitting and half laying on it, Eddie's legs on top of Richie's.

"I said you were annoying but I loved it when you joined me on the hammock."

"Hm, I would've preferred having it for myself for once" Eddie said.

"You little shit!" Richie exclaimed and began trying to throw Eddie off.

His friend began laughing and tried to get Richie away from him. The physics of the hammock only allowed such thing for about a second before the hammock turned and both fell onto the ground, Richie on top of his friend. They both burst out into laughter.

Then Eddie grabbed Richie's face and pressed his lips on his gently.

Wow, Eds...

Richie's free hand - the one he was not using to support himself above Eddie - wandered to his waist. Then he slowly slid a finger under his shirt.

Their lips separated and Eddie stroked Richie's cheek.

"We should get studying" Eddie said after a short silence.

Richie groaned and sat up. "My boyfriend sucks, I want an exchange." *My boyfriend...*

Eddie sat up and looked at him. "Boyfriend?"

"Oh sorry, is this just a fling? Didn't wanna make things awkward"

Richie said mockingly as he stood up. He helped his friend stand up too by giving him his hand. Eddie tried to get as much dirt off his clothes as possible.

"It sounds nice" he said smiling at his *boyfriend*.

Richie smiled back and then crouched down to his rucksack.

"What do you think the others would think?" Eddie asked hesitantly.

"I don't know, I don't think they would have a problem. We're all losers anyways."

"Should we maybe... y'know, tell them?"

"If you're comfortable enough."

"Are you?"

Richie turned to face him and put a hand on his cheek. "I would love to show you off, Eds" he said and kissed him. Eddie wrapped his arms around his waist.

"I wish we wouldn't need to study..." he whispered staring at the other's lips.

"You're the one insisting."

"I know, 'cause it's a very important test..."

"Let's just reward ourselves after every chapter" Richie said grinning.

"Sounds like a plan" Eddie grinned back and kissed him again.

9. Taking the Leap

"Let's talk weekend plans!" Beverly said when she sat down at the cafeteria table with her food tray and Ben at her side.

The rest of the Losers Club was already sitting at it.

"Ha-have you got suh-something in mind?"

"Yes. Since it's probably the last warm weekend we could go for a swim at the quarry. We could have a picnic and bring a radio."

"Sounds fun" Eddie replied.

Richie only in bathing trunks.

His cheeks flushed and he stared down at his food.

"I could bring the radio" Richie said.

"I'll bring snacks, could someone make sandwiches?" Beverly asked.

Suddenly someone hit the back of Eddie's head. He looked up and the kid who had beaten up Richie a few days ago walked passed their table with a friend at his side. Richie moved upwards indicating that he wanted to stand up.

"Rich, don't!" Eddie said and grabbed his friend's arm to stop him from finishing the action. He sat back down.

"Yeah, hold your faggot friend back. Last time he didn't look too pretty" the bully said with an evil grin. Richie looked back at him gloomily. Eddie saw in his eyes that he was still tempted to stand up and confront the boy.

"If you stand up, I'm not gonna stitch you back together again!"

Richie looked back at his food and the bully disappeared with his friend.

"Are you okay, Eddie?" Beverly asked.

"Yes, I'm fine."

"That's the same guy from a few weeks ago, right?" Ben said.

"What happened there, guys?" Mike asked concerned.

"When we went out in the break this guy punched Richie" Ben said.

"Just like that?" Stan asked.

"I was coughing and Richie put an arm around me, that triggered that asshole..." Eddie said looking to the side shyly.

"And then he got me when I was alone, that's why I look like this" Richie replied pointing at his bruised face and smiling awkwardly.

"The nuh-new Bowers, huh?"

"It's this fucking town. One Henry after the other" Richie said. "It's like a curse."

On Saturday evening the seven friends all walked to the quarry together. They left all their things on a rock by the water.

Beverly took her dress off. "So, who dares to jump off the cliff with me?"

All of her friends avoided eye contact and awkwardly looked around. "Cowards" she said grinning. She turned around and walked away to make the jump.

"Bev, wait!"

Ben had stood up.

"You wanna join?" she asked and held her hand out.

He smiled nodding and took it.

Richie pushed his glasses up as he followed the two with his eyes. "I would go too, but I wouldn't want to be a cockblock, y'know?"

"That is so tuh-totally an excuse."

"Oh, yes?" Richie said standing up. He took his t-shirt off and followed his two friends.

Eddie stared at his naked upper body and blushed.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. This is not going to end well..

"Let's all go" Mike said standing up too. "Like we did as kids."

Bill stood up followed by Eddie and Stanley. And so all seven of them stood at the cliff a few minutes later and looked down.

"It's really fucking high..." Eddie said.

"No shit, sherlock" Richie replied and Eddie gave him a glare.

"Must be over six meters" Ben remarked.

"Okay, give me some space to run" Beverly said and took some steps back. The rest of the Losers got out of her way. She ran a few steps and then jumped off without hesitation.

"That girl's insane" Stan whispered.

"She's amazing" Ben said in awe.

"You should jump next to impress her, Haystack" Richie said patting his back.

"I-I don't want to impress her!" Ben replied defensively. He shot a look at Bill. "But I'll try."

He took a few steps back, took a few breaths in and out and started running. Before jumping he pressed his eyelids shut.

The rest of the friends looked down when they heard the splash.

"You did it!" Beverly called when Ben emerged from the water.

He grinned widely and proudly.

She swam towards him and hugged him. He blushed. The hug only worked a few seconds before Ben swallowed water and the two of them burst out into laughter.

The next to jump was Bill. After him Mike came.

"Okay, Trashmouth, weren't you eager to jump before?" Stanley asked.

"I can wait, dear. I need to motivate my boy Eds to jump."

"I hate you."

Stan sighted. When he had jumped too Richie turned to Eddie.

"I just wanted some privacy."

"You're just a pussy" Eddie replied grinning.

Richie grabbed his waist and pulled him close. Their naked upper bodies touched which made Eddie shiver. His heart rate increased rapidly. Richie leant down to kiss him which did not better the situation. Eddie grabbed his face and pulled it closer. He felt how Richie smiled into the kiss. His hands moved around his naked upper body which made every inch of his body tingle, particularly in the area below his abdomen.

Fuck, shit, fuck! What are you trying to do, Rich?

"Uhm, I'm gonna jump before they get suspicious" Eddie said quickly after the kiss. He turned away, trying very hard for Richie to only see the back of him. Then he jumped quickly without hesitation nor a sprint.

What the...

Eds did you just...

When he could Richie jumped too.

"Why the hu-hell did you tuh-take so long?" Bill asked when Richie and Eddie had joined their friends in the water.

They looked at each other blushing.

"Uh-uhm, well..." Eddie began.

"Cause they were scared, probably" Stan replied.

"Eds was, so I had to perform a little motivational speech."

Eddie splashed him with water. "I was not, asshole! You were the scared one!"

Richie splashed back so Eddie tried to submerge his face into the water.

"You guys are like an old married couple" Ben grinned.

"They really are!" Mike exclaimed while Eddie continued trying to drown his boyfriend. He let go off him laughing when he began choking.

"Wouldn't it be so weird if they dated someone else?" Beverly asked looking at the others.

"Oh, I could never get such a cutie" Richie said pinching his boyfriend's cheek.

"I hate you."

"You sound just like my parents" Stan said and everyone began laughing.

"About that..." Richie began when the laughter died out. He glanced at Eddie who gave him a nod. "The old Eds and I have kind of being having... an affair, if you know what I mean."

Eddie groaned and splashed water at him again. "That's not what I meant by telling them!"

"Dear, you know I crack jokes. That's what I do."

"Whu-wait, so is it true or not?" Bill asked.

The couple exchanged looks. "Not an affair, of course... But we're kinda..." Eddie replied looking down. He took a deep breath in.

"We're a couple."

There was a short silence in which their hearts beat faster than ever and Eddie had the urge to cry.

"That's great guys!" Beverly said smiling at them.

"Forreal?" Richie asked surprised. A huge sense of relief spread through his body. No dirty secret anymore, no hidden shame. Not in front of his friends at least.

"Yeah, we're happy for you!" Ben said.

"You sound like proud parents" Richie replied grinning.

"We're glad you could tell us" Mike smiled.

Stan only gave them an approving smile, but that was his way of showing affection and acceptance and they could not have asked for more.

"Yuh-yeah. Losers stick together. And if th-that asshole ever touches you again, we'll prepare for the next rock fight."

Everyone laughed.

A flood of happiness spread through Richie and Eddie. They smiled at each other, tears in their eyes. *We have the best friends*, both thought.

10. Losers and Lovers

"So" Beverly began when all of the Losers had dried up and were sitting around a small fire by the water. "How long has this been going on without us knowing?"

She looked at Richie and Eddie who were sitting next to each other in front of her.

Richie put his arm around his boyfriend and kissed him on the cheek. He thought it would take a longer while for them to be comfortable enough to show affection in front of their friends, but just after an hour it already felt like the most natural thing on earth.

"For about three weeks" he replied. Eddie nodded and smiled at him.

"Oh, get a room!" Stan said and threw a packet of crisps at Richie.

"You're just jealous you don't have such a cute boyfriend" he responded taking the packet and opening it.

"We finally have the classic annoying couple in our group" Mike laughed.

"We always had it, just without the kissing" Stan commented.

"That is true! We really should've known" Beverly said.

Eddie smiled at Richie and in that moment they felt nothing but happiness. He did not want to annoy his friends but he could not hold himself back from giving Richie a quick kiss. Everything felt so right.

As the sun disappeared behind the trees the Losers began packing up. When they were finished Richie and Beverly each put on a cigarette and the friends began walking.

"Hey, Rich."

"Hm?" Richie asked turning to Eddie who appeared beside him.

"Could I maybe stay at yours? I don't want to go home."

"Of course, Eds. My parents won't mind" he replied taking his boyfriend's hand with his free one.

My parents never mind about anything.

No. That doesn't matter right now.

He looked at Eddie, his face glowing in the fading sunlight and he smiled.

Only he does.

Who needs parents who care when you have got great friends and the most lovely boyfriend?

When the two of them entered the Tozier home Richie quickly asked his parents if Eddie could stay for the night and Eddie thanked them when they said yes. Then they went into Richie's room.

"Today was great" Eddie said as he was taking off his shoes whilst sitting on Richie's bed.

"It was. Our friends are the best" Richie responded sitting down next to him. He went through his hair with his hand and kissed his forehead.

"They are" Eddie said and having finished taking off both of his shoes he turned to his friend. He leaned forward, cupped his cheeks and linked their lips.

"Eds" Richie whispered when they separated.

Eddie looked at him and noticed tears in his eyes. "Oh no, what's wrong?"

"I'm just happy" he said, his voice trembling.

Eddie smiled and his eyes became watery too. "Me too, dumbass." He let go of his face and tried brushing a few tears out of his face.

"Eddie..." Richie needed to pause to collect himself for a second as Eddie watched him curiously tears running down his face. He stroked his cheek. "I love you."

For a few seconds Eddie stared at him wide eyed. Then noticeably more tears began running down his cheeks. "I love you too, idiot" he said and began sobbing uncontrollably. He kissed Richie anyways grabbing his face clumsily. A salty tasting kiss from the tears covering their faces. But a beautiful kiss nonetheless. Both were smiling into the kiss so it did not last very long.

Then they smiled at each other and hugged for various minutes until they stopped crying.

"We're very manly" Eddie giggled brushing the last tear out of his face.

"Extremely" Richie laughed. Then he stood up took his shoes off. Then his jumper and t-shirt and at last his trousers. Eddie watched him as he put on his pyjama.

"Do you need something to sleep in?" Richie asked when he noticed his gaze.

"Yeah, kinda..." *but that's not why I was staring.*

He turned around again and scrambled through his drawers. He got out a t-shirt out smelled it and threw it to his friend. "I hope that's washed."

"You're disgusting" Eddie scoffed but changed into the shirt.

"But you love me with all my flaws" Richie replied grinning and kissed his cheek.

"More like despite your flaws."

"You can go back home and cuddle with your mom anytime you want, dear" he said getting into bed and putting his glasses on his night stand.

Eddie crawled in next to him and kissed him. Richie put his arm around him.

"I don't want it to lose meaning, but just say it once more, please" he whispered.

"You mean that I love you?"

"Yes."

"I love you" Eddie whispered going through Richie's hair with his hand. "I love you, I love you, I love you. And it doesn't lose meaning no matter how often I say it."

"I love you too" Richie replied smiling and putting his other arm around Eddie's waist.

Exhausted from the day at the lake their eyes soon closed and the two of them fell into a deep sleep.

Eddie was woken up by the sun shining through the window. He blinked lazily and saw Richie's face in front of his. He smiled as he looked at his boyfriend who was still asleep.

He wanted to touch his cheek and kiss him, but he looked so peaceful and happy he did not want to wake him up.

"I love you" he whispered.

Richie mumbled something and Eddie got a bit closer to him. He could not hold himself back and took his hand under the blanket, and stroked it with his thumb.

Richie's eyes slowly opened and smiled when they met with Eddie's. He put his arm around Eddie's waist and pulled him close.

"Good morning, darling" he said and kissed his forehead.

"Good morning" Eddie mumbled and snuggled even closer "Let's stay in bed all day."

"It's sunday, babe, we can do whatever we want."

"Well then it's decided."

Richie went through Eddie's hair with his fingers.

"I like your plan."

"Don't stop doing that."

He messed Eddie's hair up and hugged him with both of his arms.

"Aw, my needy little baby" he giggled rocking him in his arms. Then he kissed him on the forehead, on the temple and on the cheek. He wanted to kiss him on the lips too but he turned away and pushed Richie away with his arms.

"I hate you" Eddie said but started giggling when Richie kissed his neck. "Fuck you."

"Fuck you more" Richie laughed and kissed his jaw.

Eddie turned his face back to him and cupped his cheeks. Richie was leant over him and they locked eyes. They stared at each other in silence for a while. They looked at every detail in each others faces and Eddie stroked Richie's cheek with his thumb. Then they slowly leant into each other. They linked their lips Richies hand on Eddie's waist. Their lips moved slowly as Richie's fingers moved under Eddie's shirt.

Suddenly Eddie began laughing.

"What's wrong?"

"That tickles."

"Fuck you" Richie said grinning. He slowly moved his hand under the rim of Eddie's shirt keeping eye contact.

Eddie tried very hard not to laugh. But then Richie began actively tickling his stomach and Eddie burst out laughing trying to get Richie's hands off him.

"I hate you!"

"You take your "I love you"s back?"

"Yes, all of them."

Richie stopped and kissed his cheek.

"Did you get scared there?" Eddie giggled.

"Do you want me to continue?"

"With the kissing, yes. Not the tickling, thank you."

Richie's lips wandered to his neck and began kissing it.

Oh shit, Eddie thought. It felt better than he had expected. Before he knew it was happening a faint moan escaped his lips. He put his hand on his mouth in shock and his cheeks gained a pink colour.

Richie let out a muffled laugh. "Don't worry, honey."

Eddie turned his face away. "Don't give me a hickey. My mom-"

"Will kill you."

"But like, forreal this time."

"I know... I fucking know" Richie said and sat up on the bed.

"Why are you mad at me?"

"I'm not, Eds. I mad at the world. I just want to give you hickies, hold

your hand in public, kiss every inch of your dumb face..." he said looking away.

"I want that too, but we have to accept that it's not possible. Focus on right now. We're here, we could stay in bed all day. We can do whatever we want, just not in public" Eddie said grabbing Richie's face.

"Can you just accept that?"

"I can if the other option is getting beaten up. Richie, I don't want you to get hurt. If you do, I'm gonna kill you."

Richie laughed and smiled at Eddie. "You're the best thing that ever happened to me. You're gonna make me cry again."

"Wow, I'm able to make Richie Trashmouth Tozier cry."

"Where should we go after school to get away?" Richie asked putting an arm around Eddie who leaned his head on his shoulder.

"Anywhere."

"I'm between New York or somewhere in California."

"Let's try both" Eddie said grinning up at Richie.

"That's the spirit" he said and kissed him.

"Uhm, I know we said we would stay in bed all day but, uhm..."

"You're hungry?"

"Yeah..."

11. The Storm Before the Calm

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry I'm posting so infrequently I didn't have a lot of time. But now I'm back and have nothing to do so yey!

Richie's parents had left to go to church. Eddie was sitting on the counter as Richie made sandwiches.

"Sooo, do you have any plans for next weekend?" he asked.

"Nope, why?"

"There's this band Bevv and I like and they're performing in the city this weekend..."

"Which?"

"Nirvana. Wait, I'll put them on."

Richie left and brought a cassette from his room. He put it in the cassetteplayer and pressed start. Eddie's first thought after hearing the beginning of the song was: *my mom would hate this. She would hate Richie too for showing me this.*

Richie continued making sandwiches as he sang some of the lyrics along.

"I wanna go to the concert. It would be cooler if you came with. You know, a weekend away from this shithole. In a city" he said standing in front of Eddie and putting his hands on his thighs. "You know, where people aren't so stuck up..."

"Mhm..." Eddie replied putting his arms around Richie's neck.

"So, is that a yes?"

"Uhm, well my mom..."

Richie sighted. "Okay well, I will go for sure. If you change your mind, tell me."

"Please don't be mad, you know how she is..."

"I'm not mad, dear" he replied turning away and finishing the sandwiches. He put each on a separate plate and gave one to his boyfriend. Together they sat on the sofa and ate.

"Do you like the music?"

"Yes, it's cool" Eddie replied and looked at the other. He had gotten a lot of freckles over the summer which were now fading again. His skin was pale but his cheeks were pink shimmered. It was such a nice

feeling just to sit and eat with him. He wanted to stay like this forever.

"I really want to go to the city with you. I don't fucking care what ma says" he suddenly said without planning to.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes." *I think so.*

"Cool, I'll pick you up Friday evening next week."

Eddie nodded.

"It will just be the two of us. Beverly can't, she's got some theatre thing."

"But aren't you both in theatre?"

"Yeah, but she actually cares about it."

Eddie laughed. It made Richie smile.

"Well, just the two of us sounds great" he said. He took the last bite of his sandwich and put the plate on the table. Richie copied him.

"I can't wait" he said putting an arm around him and messing his hair up.

"Fuck you. Don't make me rethink my choice."

Eddie opened the front door as quietly as possible when he arrived home in the evening. As always his mother heard it anyways.

"Eddie-bear? Are you finally home?" she shouted from the living room.

"Yes, ma."

"Where have you been all weekend?"

"Uhm... at Richie's."

A short silence.

Shit, does she-?

"Okay, Eddie-bear. You had me worried."

"I'm sorry, ma"

He was still standing at the door, but now walked into the living room.

"Please stay at home this week."

Eddie nodded. "Yes ma..." He still needed to ask her for permission to leave for the weekend (which technically wasn't the week), but that could wait.

On Friday he had still not asked his mother about the weekend

plans.

When he left school on that day he was starting to feel sick. He was certain his mother would not allow him to leave. When he entered his house and greeted her he could still not bring himself to ask. He went up to his room and did his homework, but was unable to concentrate. He gave up and started packing his things for the trip with Richie instead. He happily remembered that he would be in an actual city with people whose minds weren't stuck in the fifties so he made sure to pack all his favourite items of clothing. Then he went into the bathroom to get all the pills and other medicine he might need.

It was six o'clock. Richie would be there in half an hour. Eddie's heart started racing. He took his bag, put a jacket on and went downstairs. He walked into the living room where his mother was sitting in her usual armchair.

"Eddie-bear? What are you doing with the bag?"

"Ma, can I leave for the weekend?" he asked.

"What? I told you to stay home" Mrs Kaspbrak responded in a confused manner.

"I'm nearly eighteen. I wanna leave the house on weekends. I can't constantly be home like a-uhm, like a house cat!"

"Where do you even want to go?" she said clearly trying to remain calm.

"The city."

"Do you know how many diseases-"

"Ma, I've got all medicine I need with me."

"Who is going with you?"

"Uhm... Bill, Ben... Richie and uhm... Stan-"

"But not Beverly Marsh?"

"Uh-no."

"Good, I don't want you around such dirty girls."

"Beverly is my friend!" Eddie said as anger built up inside of him.

"Edward."

"She's not dirty! She's great and nice-"

"Edward, are you telling me you like her? There are better girls for you out there."

"I like her as a friend!"

"Do not raise your voice at me, Edward! You're not leaving!"

"I am! I'm leaving and it's gonna be great!"

"You're talking crazy. You're not going to the city. How are you even

getting there? Where are you sleeping-"

"I don't know. Richie planned it..."

"Richard Tozier? Is that boy even able to plan anything? If you ask me he's as dirty as the Marsh gi-"

"Shut up!" Eddie shouted. In her surprise Mrs Kaspbrak was not able to respond before her son continued.

"Richie's not dirty. Neither is Beverly! How can you insult my friends in front of me if you never even took the time to meet them. You just hear rumours and try to get me away from them so you can keep me to yourself. But you know what, you achieved the opposite! I love my friends. And I'm gonna go to the city with Richie and we're gonna gonna go to a concert. And you can't stop me!"

After Eddie's rant silence filled the room for a few seconds. Mrs Kasbprak stood up slowly.

"Edward, Eddie-bear, you don't know what you're saying" she said with a shaking voice that sounded as if it was about to start shouting.

"I know exactly what I'm saying. Goodbye ma" Eddie said and turned around. Luckily he was closer to the front door than her. He ran outside and shut the door with a loud thump.

Outside he looked at his watch. 6:34. He looked around.

"This is a really bad time to be late Rich.." he whispered to himself.

Then he saw someone waving from a car window.

What the-

He turned around and saw his mother in the frame of the front door. He ran to the car and on the driver's seat was Richie about to light a cigarette. He quickly got into the car.

"Hey hey, honeyb-"

"Start the fucking motor, we gotta go!" Eddie said.

"What the hell?" Richie said as he turned the key. The unlit cigarette still between his lips. When car began moving he asked "What happened?"

Eddie looked back. Mrs Kaspbrak was standing in the middle of the street shouting something he could not hear.

"Argument with m- my mother. Well, more like a fight. She didn't want me to go."

Richie grinned, but when he saw his boyfriend's serious expression his grin faded. He finished turning on his cigarette.

"I'm sorry about that. But head up, we're gonna have a great weekend."

"Yeah I know" Eddie replied smiling. "Richard Tozier, do you want to

tell me where the hell this car came from? Don't tell me you stole it."
"Funny story. Bought it cheaply from a distant cousin or something"
he replied taking a drag from the cigarette in his left hand.
"When was I gonna find out?"
"Today. It was supposed to be a surprise."
"Well, the surprise was a success."
"I'm glad, honey-bun."
"I hate those stupid nicknames"
"You know you love them, Eds. Don't lie to yourself."
Eddie could not help but smile. He watched the "You're now leaving
Derry" sign pass by and his smile grew wider.

12. Five Star Hotel

Richie stopped the car in front of a shabby looking motel.

"Welcome to our five star hotel" he said grinning at his boyfriend.

There must be so many germs in our room.

Richie read his thoughts. "I know babe, but our minimal pocket money from our parents and summer jobs really doesn't make up for more."

Eddie took an audible breath in. "It's okay, you're right. God, I wish we were rich."

"Who doesn't honey?" Richie replied and opened his door. Both of them got out of the car and got their bags.

"I bet we're gonna get the best suit" he said putting an arm around him.

"We might get punched, if anything."

"Don't be so moody, now! We're gonna see motherfucking Nirvana tomorrow. We're not getting punched, friends put their arms around each other. Its normal." He pinched his cheek. "Now come on, grumpy."

"I'm sorry, you're right. We've left Derry, what more can I ask for?"

"Exactly. Positive thinking."

They checked in at the counter and then went to their room. As expected it was small. The two of them could barely walk past one another through the space between the wall and the bathroom door. Eddie loved it. A little room just for him and Richie. The circumstances made it bearable that there were weird stains on floor, walls and mattress.

"What do you think?" Richie asked behind him and wrapped his arms around his shoulders.

"It's great" he replied turning to face him.

Richie closed the door behind them and then Eddie kissed him standing on tiptoes and pushing him against the wooden door.

"I wish we could do this on the concert."

"With your hair having grown so long you might just pass as a girl" Eddie said giggling.

"Fuck you. No one would believe that you were kissing a girl anyways" Richie responded grinning and leaning down to link their lips again.

But Eddie moved away and took a step backwards.

"What is that supposed to mean?" he asked and he sounded genuinely offended.

Richie was puzzled. "Well, you're not exactly into girls, are you?" he replied irritated.

"I'm not gay-gay."

He gave him a confused look. "What is that supposed to mean?"

"I'm not gonna... y'know, walk around in my underwear, wear dresses, make-up or that kinda thing..."

There it was again. His mother...

"Just because I like you, doesn't mean I am like them."

It hurt and it made Richie slightly angry, but the anger quickly shifted to anger directed at Mrs Kaspbrak. Eddie could see the hurt in his friend's eyes.

Shit, shit. Shit.

"Wearing dresses has nothing to do with liking boys."

Eddie stayed silent.

"You don't want to tell me you don't find other guys attractive? Like apart from me."

"What makes you think I find you attractive?" Eddie asked grinning.

Richie chuckled, but relief filled his body. Thank god, he thought this would end up on a fight when they had just arrived.

"Thought you and your mother might have similar opinions."

"Fuck you!" Eddie said grinning brightly. "But yes, I guess I like... I only like guys..." he added looking at his feet.

"And admitting that doesn't change anything about you."

He looked up again and smiled at the other thankfully.

"But labels suck anyways. All that matters is that you like me."

Eddie was about to give another sarcastic comment, but instead kissed Richie placing his hands on his chest.

"I love you, Eddie"

Everytime Richie said those three words Eddie's heart skipped a beat. Adding his name at the end made that feeling the more intense. The feeling was mutual.

Eddie's hands wandered up to be wrapped around his neck.

"I love you, Rich." Knowing his boyfriend felt the same way about the sentence put a satisfied smile on his face.

Richie let his bag fall onto the floor. Then he held Eddie with one hand and picked him up by the knees. He walked towards the bed and threw him onto it. Eddie giggled and Richie leant over him. Again he wrapped his arms around his neck and smiled at him softly.

Riche smiled back and leant down to kiss him.

"I brought a little something" Richie said leaning away. He went to his bag and got a glass bottle and a little plastic bag out of it. He turned to face Eddie who was sitting cross legged on the bed and held the two things up, one in each hand.

"Which one do you prefer, dear?"

"Uhm, bottle first."

"I'm so fucking glad we're doing this" Eddie said an hour later. The alcohol was already making him feel funny. "Us two alone in a shitty motel."

"Right? Nothing I would rather do."

They were sitting on the bed leaning against the wall.

"Rich, honeybunny, dear" he began being interrupted by hiccup.

"Darling."

Richie laughed "I thought you hated nicknames."

"Pshhht" Eddie replied turning to him and putting his finger on his lips which caused him to laugh even harder. Eddie smiled at him and then pressed his lips gently to his. The movement was clumsy because of the alcohol intus, but nice anyways.

The room was dimly lit and the sky was darkening. Suddenly Eddie's lips moved to his neck. It caught him off guard.

It's because of the alcohol.

But it's so nice...

He's only doing it cause he's drunk.

"Eds, babe" he whispered and gently pushed him away.

"Sorry, did I do it wrong?" Eddie asked and put his hand in front of his mouth to hide a silent burb.

"No, no. It's just... I don't want you to do something you'd be embarrassed about if you weren't drunk."

"Awww you're so sweet. If I wouldn't be drunk I just wouldn't have the guts" he replied, but did not try it again. He laid down putting his head on Richie's lap.

"I'm so tired" he mumbled.

"Then sleep, dear."

"But I wanna be awake with you, honey-bunny" he mumbled with closed eyes. He laid his hand on Richie's cheek who grinned and started playing with his hair.

"This is pretty gay" Eddie said smiling. He chuckled and Richie giggled.

"It really is."

Richie looked at him as he fell asleep still stroking his hair. After a while he carefully moved his head and left the bed. He got all the things he needed to roll a joint out of his bag. He rolled one and then put a jacket on. He put the light off and left the room directing a last smile at his sleeping boyfriend.

They had not drunken a lot so the effect had mostly worn off already. The cool air outside made Richie feel completely sober again. He sat onto a bench. He lit the joint and put it between his lips. Time to unsober again.

The sky had turned completely black. There were very few stars. That was the only nice thing about Derry. You could see many stars. In a real city you could not. The only nice thing apart from his friends of course. How could such a horrible town create six such wonderful people? He took a drag and watched the smoke dance in the air in front of the pitch black sky.

Suddenly he heard a click behind him. He turned around startled. A sleepy Eddie stood in front of their door rubbing his eyes.

"What are you doing?" he asked yawning and walking towards him.

Richie held the joint up. "You want a drag?"

Eddie considered it for a while. He was wearing an oversized jumper and his arms were crossed in front of his chest. Then he took it and sat next to Richie. He took a drag as Richie laid his arm around his shoulders. Eddie put his head on his shoulder and he kissed the top of it. They sat there in silence for a while passing the joint from one to the other. The silence was interrupted every once in a while by Eddie coughing.

"I love this" Eddie said quietly after a few minutes.

"Hm?"

"Being with you in the city away from fucking Derry. Doing whatever we want."

"I love it too" Richie said taking Eddie's hand.

Eddie began giggling.

"What?"

"It's getting to me."

Richie chuckled, pressed Eddie closer and kissed his forehead. After a while of talking about random issues and constantly changing themes they killed the joint and went back inside.

They brushed their teeth and fell onto the bed.

"I'm so dead" Eddie said staring at the ceiling.

Richie turned the light off and turned back to him. He put his hand on his cheek and gave him a short kiss.

"Goodnight babe."

"Goodnight Rich" Eddie mumbled and quickly fell asleep.

13. The Concert

The next day Richie was the first one to wake up. Eddie was woken up by the sound of running water at around eight in the morning. It took him a few seconds to remember that the two of them were in a motel, not in Derry. He smiled. He could not help but imagine living in a small apartment in the city with his boyfriend. Waking up with him every day and live their lives together. Away from Derry. Far, far away.

"Good morning, Eds." Richie had finished showering and had left the bathroom while Eddie had been daydreaming and thus not noticed it. Richie was only wearing a towel slung around his waist.

Eddie's cheeks flushed. "G-good morning."

"Do you also wanna shower?"

"Erm, yeah. On my way" he replied quickly getting out of bed and entering the bathroom with his bag.

When the water was running the image of Richie only wearing a towel, a naked upper body and wet hair sticking to his face appeared in his mind again. What if something was going to happen this weekend? Something... of sexual nature. Eddie's face heat up. He did not feel ready for *that*, which did not mean he hated the idea. He had imagined things happen before. Inappropriate daydreams invading his mind at inappropriate times. In a way he wanted something to happen. It was the perfect setting, was it not? Well, apart from the stained mattress. Okay, maybe it could wait. It should wait. But what if he left the bathroom and Richie would be standing there still with a naked upper body. What if he would push him onto the bed and start kissing his neck and his torso and he would feel his warm naked skin against his and-

"Hurry up, asshole! I'm starving!" Richie called knocking on the door bringing Eddie back to reality.

Fuck, did I really just imagine that?

He put his face in his hands.

Get a grip, Eds!

"I'm not taking any longer than you, dipshit! Stop whining!"

Eddie finished showering, got dressed and the two of them left their room. Close to the motel they found a small cute café where they ate breakfast. Afterwards they went grocery shopping. ("We can't afford

eating out every meal!")

"We need food that only needs hot water" Eddie mumbled walking through the aisles. Their room did not have a kitchen, but a kettle. "I'm thinking a few instant meals and bread."

Richie had no complaints so they bought what they needed and went back to their motel. When they were hungry again they each ate an instant meal and when they were finished it was time to get ready for the concert.

Richie put on a black Led Zeppelin T-shirt, ripped jeans, a flannel shirt and his worn out converse. Eddie tried to match the aesthetic of Richie's outfit and what he thought Nirvana fans would dress like with what he had at his disposal. He ended up wearing black jeans, sneakers and Richie's *The Clash* T-shirt which he had kept after the camping trip. He put a dark green wind jacket on too.

"Are you ever going to give that back to me?" Richie asked looking at Eddie's shirt.

"I'll think about it."

Richie shrugged and then put his hands on his waist. "It looks better on you anyways."

Eddie smiled and gave him a kiss on the lips. "Are you ready to go?"

"Uhm... just one more thing" Richie replied and went to the bathroom. He left the door open so Eddie followed him and stood in the frame.

"Bevvv leant me some make-up" Richie explained scrambling through a little bag. He found what he was looking for and took a little black stick out of the bag. Eddie observed him confused.

"What is that?"

"Eyeliner, I hope..." Richie replied, opened the lid and seemed satisfied when he saw it looked like a pencil. He drew black eyeliner around his eyes. It was not a straight line, but it was not supposed to be one anyways.

He turned and looked at Eddie with an askew smile. "You're ready?" He had no idea what his reaction would be. Would he tell him to take it off? The millisecond it took for Eddie to react seemed like an eternity.

"Y-yeah. Let's go" he said and turned away. Probably the best reaction he could have hoped for. Richie nodded and followed his boyfriend outside.

"I think, uhm... it's very brave of you to paint your eyes" Eddie said hesitantly after a short silence grabbing Richie's hand. The streets

were empty and dark.

"Thanks, I guess. Does it look good though?"

"It suits the style. And the style suits you. Although you're kinda betraying yourself by not wearing your obnoxious Hawaiian shirts" he replied grinning.

Richie ruffled his hair. He knew Eddie was trying his best to open his mind and escape his mother's ideals and he loved him for it.

It was such an amazing feeling to stand around so many people who were all there for the same reason and liked the same music. Eddie standing next to him made it even better. Looking around with his brown eyes, wearing *his* t-shirt that was too big for him. It was really a constant challenge not to hug or kiss him every few seconds.

They were already inside the venue waiting for the band. They were standing around the middle. When the three band members finally stepped on stage the audience began shouting and shrieking. Richie grabbed Eddie's hand and squeezed it. He had never felt so at home before.

"That was fucking amazing!" Eddie shouted when they were on their way back to the motel after the concert.

"I was already scared you wouldn't like it."

"Are you kidding?"

Richie grinned satisfied. He was glad Eddie had had a good time. He got his Winstons out of the back pocket of his jeans. He lit a cigarette and put them back.

"Let's go get drinks!"

"Eddie-bear, we're not 21 yet."

"Aw shit, let's drink the rest of the alcohol at home then."

At home.

"Yeah, but just a little. I gotta drive tomorrow" Richie said grabbing his hand.

"Fuck! Can't we just stay?"

"I wish, Eds. Only one year left" he replied taking a drag from his cigarette.

Eddie sighted. "That's too long."

"But it is, what it is."

When they arrived at their room both let themselves fall onto the

bed.

"We... really need a shower" Eddie said after a while of silently staring at the ceiling. Both giggled. After sweating so much at the concert they truly did not smell great anymore.

"But I can't even stand anymore!" Richie moaned.

"Whatever you want, but you're not touching me anymore until you've showered" Eddie replied getting out of bed and walking into the bathroom. Richie showered after him, but not without more complaints and protests.

"See? Doesn't that feel much better?" Eddie asked when Richie exited the bathroom dressed in his pyjama.

"Yeah, I guess" he replied reluctantly.

Eddie took his glasses off. Then he slung his arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Okay, now it was worth it" Richie grinned after the kiss and stroked his back.

"I hate you."

"Hate you too, love" he said and kissed him pushing him towards the bed. When Eddie's legs touched the mattress he sat down onto as the kiss continued. Richie pushed him gently and he laid on his back. He leant over him and kissed his neck while he put his hands on his waist and slowly slipped them under his shirt.

"Since I can't leave hickeys on your neck..." he said and slightly pushed Eddie's shirt up. Then he placed his lips on his lower torso and slowly moved up as he pushed the shirt further.

"I love you in that shirt, but..."

Fuck, Rich, what are you doing? Where is this going?

When the shirt reached Eddie's armpits Richie stopped kissing his upper body and looked up at him. Eddie quickly took his shirt off sitting up and then grabbed Richie's face and kissed him passionately. He slowly fell back on his bag pulling his boyfriend with him. Then his hands moved to the hem of his shirt.

What am I doing?

He pushed it up and Richie took it off. Then Richie linked their lips again and their naked upper bodies touched. Eddie slung his arms around his neck and pressed him close. He never wanted their bodies to separate. His soft lips, his warm skin-

Fuck, Richie!

Eddie suddenly pushed him away and jumped off the bed.

"What happened?" Richie asked confused. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No, no..." Eddie said irritated and went to the bathroom to collect himself. He closed the door and took a deep breath in. "Fuck, fuck, fuck!" he whispered to himself.

Maybe it was just his Winston's in his front pocket...

Of course it wasn't! Or do you also have a packet on you?

"Fuck, fuck, fuck" he whispered again and put his face in his hands.

I'm not ready am I? Apparently I really want to be though...

"Eds?" Richie's voice came from behind the door accompanied by a gentle knock. "Are you okay? Listen, I'm sorry. I shouldn't... have done, uhm... that."

After a few seconds and another deep breath in Eddie opened the door slowly looking down. Richie had put his t-shirt back on.

"I'm okay, sorry..."

"Don't worry" Richie replied biting his lip. "As long as you're okay."

Eddie awkwardly covered his upper body with his arms. Richie gave him The Clash shirt with an askew smile.

"Thanks" he mumbled and put it on as he walked to the bed.

"Eddie, I'm sorry. I just didn't think clearly anymore."

"Me neither, Rich. It's okay" he replied getting under the blanket. "I just suddenly realised... what was actually happening."

Richie got into bed too. He did not know what to respond, so he did not.

"I just... need more time" Eddie continued as he was laying on his back. "I'm sorry."

"Okay, yeah..." Richie said. "Don't apologise for it, though."

Eddie turned his head to look at him with a subtle but thankful smile.

"So, you still want that drink? For a good night's sleep."

After a short consideration Eddie nodded. "Why not."

Richie grinned. He got out of bed again and filled two glasses with a vodka shot and soda. He gave Eddie one of the glasses as he sat on the bed, a smirk on his lips. He held his up to clink it with Eddie's.

"To a great fucking concert and weekend" he said and then they both took a sip.

Then Richie leaned forward and gave him a short kiss. Eddie cupped his cheek with his empty hand and pulled him back when he wanted to lean away elongating the kiss.

Are you teasing me, Eds?

After a few seconds Richie pulled away and drank half of the glass in

one go. Eddie looked at him with innocent eyes.

I want you so fucking bad.

He drank the rest and put the empty glass on the nightstand. "Goodnight, Eddie" he said getting under the blanket. He turned his back to the other.

"You okay?" Eddie asked. The half full glass was still in his hand.

"Yes. We should just get to sleep."

"Right..." he replied continuing to drink.

When he was finished he turned the light off. He hugged Richie from behind and placed a kiss on his cheek.

"Goodnight, Rich." Then he turned around.

Richie could not stop thinking about what had just happened. Eddie's smooth skin touching his. The smell of his soft hair. His mind wandered off to what could have happened if he had not backed off. He imagined slipping his fingers under Eddie's trousers. Eddie grabbing his arms tightly. Kissing him while he would probably try not to make any sounds.

Beep beep, Richie, he thought to himself. He desperately tried to think about something else, but the image of Eddie's brown eyes always returned.

What he did not know or even consider was that Eddie's thoughts looked very similar as he was trying to fall asleep.

Richie's lips wandering around his upper body. His thin fingers on his skin pushing his t-shirt up. How far would it have gone if he had not pushed him away? The curiosity was killing him and he sort of regretted having stopped Richie.

But only sort of.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm sorry that what's happening at the end of the chapter isn't clear - let's just call it, "open for interpretation". I can only bring myself to write very innocent smut.

(Apart from that it's written from a perspective of two boys experiencing new feelings and discovering their sexuality in combination with young innocence so it does make sense not to spell out the smutty words. (aka me talking myself out of this somehow))
Hope you are enjoying the story though!

14. Back Home

An hour had passed and Eddie had still not fallen asleep. He turned around every few seconds and constantly changed sleeping positions. Richie was still turning his back to him. Eddie put an arm around his waist. "Are you awake?" he whispered.

"Mhm" Richie mumbled. He turned around and slung his arms around Eddie. "Can't sleep either?"

"Nope" he replied burying his face in his shoulder and tightening his grip. He took a deep breath in. Richie began going through his hair with his fingers.

"I love you" *I want to hold you forever and never let go.*

"I love you too, Eds." *But I am still kinda turned on and this is not helping.*

Eddie looked up at him and kissed him trying not to think about the fact that the two of them would have to go back to Derry the following day. *Only one year left..*

"Eddie, love... I don't know if that's the best idea right n-" Richie began after the kiss, but Eddie ignored it and kissed him again making Richie turn onto his back so that Eddie was leant over him.

Eds, don't do this to me. Richie's daydream replayed in his head. Over and over again as Eddie continued moving his lips against his.

"Babe, don't tease me like this" Richie said breaking away.

"I am not. Rich, I can't stop thinking about it..."

"Eds. What are you saying?"

"I might not be ready for... *it*, but aren't there other things, you know... we could do?"

"Are you serious? Don't do this because you feel pressured."

"I'm not" Eddie said cupping his face and getting so close to it that their noses touched.

"Wait, are you drunk?"

"Nope" Eddie whispered and softly put his lips on Richie's.

Richie wrapped his arms around his waist and pressed his body close. After a few seconds of making out he moved Eddie to lay on his back and then began kissing his neck. He moved his fingers under the hem of his shirt and then slowly under the elastic of his underwear while continuing to kiss his neck. Eddie grabbed his arm like he had done in his daydream and clawed his fingers into his skin.

"If you want me to stop tell me" Richie said and kissed his jaw.

"I don't- fuck!"

He thought it would be embarrassing to him, to have someone touch him where no one else had done so before, but it felt right in some weird way. Of course there was a bit of embarrassment left, but it was not worth mentioning.

"Shit, Rich" he whispered slinging his arms around his neck. Richie pressed his lips onto his gently. The kiss was interrupted by faint moans every once in a while.

When Eddie opened his eyes the following morning the first thing he saw was Richie sleeping next to him. He looked so peaceful he did not dare disturb his sleep. He wanted to wake up this way every morning. When the two of them lived in a small apartment in New York or perhaps Los Angeles together he would be the first one to wake up. He would go to their cute kitchen and make coffee for the two. When he would return to their room with the two cups in hand Richie would slowly wake up and give him a lazy smile. He would take the cup and give him a good morning kiss. They would walk to university hand in hand and kiss goodbye when their ways to their classes parted. They could eat in small cafes or maybe sometimes even in a nice restaurant. Listen to whatever music they wanted whenever they wanted, spend some days in bed being lazy or for "other reasons". Other days they would walk through the city centre together and make dumb jokes as they always did. Eddie smiled at the thought. He gently stroked Richie's cheek who's eyes opened slowly and blinked.

"Good morning, cutie" he mumbled.

"Good morning, asshole" Eddie replied and kissed him.

Richie closed his eyes again. "I need a little more sleep to be able to cope with your dumb ass."

"Fine" Eddie grinned and kissed his cheek. Then he moved closer to him. Soon they both fell asleep again.

When they woke up again about an hour later Eddie went to the bathroom to brush his teeth and afterwards began packing while Richie was still laying in bed.

"Rich, get up. We need to be out of here at twelve."

He groaned but did get out of bed. He too began throwing his clothes

into his bag. When they were dressed and had finished packing they left their luggage in the car. They spent a bit more time walking around the city. They ate at a fast food restaurant and bought a few snacks for the ride home.

"Sooo, Richie" Beverly began and took a drag from her cigarette. "Tell me about this past weekend."

Richie and her were sitting in a park back in Derry in the evening of that same Sunday.

"It was pretty fun, I can tell you that."

"I'm so jealous that you saw Nirvana, dude."

"I'm sorry Bevv, next time I'll drag you with."

"At least this way you and Eddie had a romantic weekend, huh?"

Richie blushed slightly remembering Saturday night. "Yeah..."

"Richard Tozier, is there something you want to tell aunt Beverly?" she asked mockingly having noticed his cheeks flushing.

"No, but you will force me to tell. Won't you?"

"You did not sleep together, did you? Don't kid me. Eddie would never!"

"You don't think he would sleep with such a handsome man as myself?"

Thinking about it it was weird to talk about his sexuality so openly with someone, but Beverly gave him the feeling that it was okay. That it was perfectly natural, something he himself had often doubted.

"He'd need a lot of convincing" she said giggling.

"Fuck you. But no, we didn't do it. Buuut..."

"What? Richie!"

"We did something... like with our hands..." he replied quietly looking at the ground. By now his whole face had turned pink. "Well, I did."

"Seriously?" she gasped putting her hand over her grinning lips. He nodded. "Richie Tozier" she said putting her hand on his shoulder. "I haven't even gotten that far with Ben. Congratulations."

"Ben is too much of a sweetheart" Richie said grinning. "I can't even imagine him doing anything of that kind."

"You better not imagine anything, pervert!" She laughed. "But Eddie is the same. Plus, his fear of germs. I hope you washed your hands well."

"Yeah, honestly I was pretty surprised by him initiating that."

"He couldn't resist you any longer."

"Must be it" Richie smiled at her. He was so thankful for her. All of the Losers were very accepting, but there was something special about her. "I love you, Bevvv."

"Don't tell Eddie that. I love you too, Rich" she smiled and put an arm around him.

"Eddie-bear!" Mrs Kaspbrak exclaimed when Eddie entered through the front door of the house, his bag in hand. "I was so worried, dear!" She jogged as fast as her figure allowed her to towards him and cupped his cheeks. She put her arms around him and pressed him close.

"I told you where I was going..."

"But still, you left so suddenly. Never do that again, you're breaking your poor mother's heart."

"I'm seventeen ma, soon I'll be gone forever anyways. You should get used to it."

Did that just come out of my mouth?

"Eddie, love. I will never, I love you too much."

What was this all about? He had left on Friday with her shouting at him and now she was being as nice as ever. In her own special way, that was.

"I love you too, ma. Can I go to my room now?"

She let go off him and as he walked up the stairs she said "We should better get a check up at the doctor's next week, the city probably left some traces on you."

He sighted and did not bother to respond. He was going to have to deal with her for the time being.

"Don't sight at me, dear. You know I dont like that."

"Yes, ma..."

15. Piercings and Nail Polish

On Monday in the break before the second last school period Beverly approached Richie at his locker.

"Hey, Rich. Have you got any plans for today?"

"Probably catching up on school work."

"Lame" she replied leaning against the other lockers.

"Yep" Richie said closing his. "Why?"

"I thought we could maybe have a little girls night - well, afternoon - at yours."

"That does sound more fun, you have managed to convince me. What exactly do you have in mind?"

"Oh, it's a surprise."

"Pillow fights in our underwear?" Richie said with a grin.

"Beep beep, Richie" she responded and began walking away. Richie caught up to her jogging a few steps.

"Oh c'mon, you threw that one at me!"

Richie and her left the school grounds together a few hours later. They jumped onto their bikes and rode the shortest way to the Tozier house.

"Beverly is here til dinner!" Richie shouted when entering the house without a greeting.

"Alright, sweetie!"

"Hello, Mrs Tozier!" Beverly shouted being used to the situation.

"Hello, dear!"

The two friends walked up the stairs and went into Richie's room.

"So, darling, what have you got planned for this fine evening?" Richie asked throwing his bag into a corner of his room.

Bev got to her knees and scrambled through her bag. He watched her curiously as she did so and was particularly confused when she took a potato out of it. She grinned at him when seeing his questioning expression.

"Okay, so you don't have to do this, but you could at least help me..." she began saying as she stood up looking at the objects laying in the palms of her hands. Besides the potato there were a few needles, a little plastic bottle, a pen, earrings and a lighter.

"What kind of satanic ritual are you planning to perform with me?" Richie asked and she giggled. "Am I gonna be the sacrifice?"

"Beep-beep, idiot" Beverly replied and put all the objects onto the already cramped table. "I want to pierce my ear. I've already got two on both ears, but I want a third on one. Symmetry sucks. If you want to we can pierce yours too!"

"Oh-uh, that's unexpected" Richie responded in a confused manner.

"You don't need to, just thought you might want to."

"Isn't that... painful?"

"Not really, it stings a bit" she said looking around the room. "Do you not have a mirror in here?"

"No, you'll have to go to the bathroom."

And so she left the room. Richie stood staring at the open door she had disappeared through with the objects debating the situation in his head.

You've wanted to pierce your ear for ages.

I have, but this is so sudden-

"Rich!" Beverly's voice interrupted his train of thought. Apparently she had expected him to follow, and so he did now.

She was standing in front of the mirror in the upstairs bathroom. Richie observed her drawing a dot onto her ear with the pen. Then she thoroughly washed the potato and put disinfectant (which was in the small plastic bottle) on it and also on her ear and a needle (after holding this one over the fighter's flame). Without hesitation she held the potato behind her ear and pinched the needle into her ear where she had drawn the dot. Richie raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"You're fucking insane!"

"Could you hand me the little silver earring, honey?"

He did as told but keeping his shocked expression. She thanked him, pinched the needle completely through followed by the earring. When she was finished she gave Richie a grin.

"Looking great" he said smiling.

"You also want one?"

"Uhm... yes, why the fuck not?"

She smiled satisfied and prepared and disinfected everything again taking a new needle. He wanted the piercing further up, right before the soft part of the ear ended. When Beverly was about to put the needle into his ear his mother's voice shouted his name. He flinched, but a sense of relief washed through him since he could delay the pain for a certain amount of time.

"One of your friends is on the phone!"

"Thank god" he whispered to himself and Beverly giggled when he

jumped up and ran down the stairs.

"Thanks mom" he said taking the phone from his mother. "Hello?"

"Hey, Rich."

"Eds?" Hearing Eddie's voice made his heart skip a beat and made him smile instinctively. "What's up?"

"I was just wondering what you were up to for the rest of the day... I was, uhm, bored."

"Bevvy is at mine."

"Oh."

"Uhm, but maybe I could ask Bev if..."

"Hey Eddie, your boyfriend is chickening out over getting pierced. Come by and witness the spectacle!"

Beverly had appeared behind him and spoken into the phone in his hand.

"What? Rich, you're getting pierced?"

"You'll have to come by to know" she replied.

"Should I really come? I don't want to be annoying or anything..."

"Of course!" she said.

"You're always welcome, Spaghetti. Give Mrs K. a kiss from me!"

A few minutes later the door bell rang. When the door was opened by Richie he was greeted by a slightly flustered Richie. He let him in with an elegant hand gesture and when he stepped through the door frame Beverly hugged him.

"What the hell are you doing? Are you guys..." he looked around and then whispered: "high?"

"No, but that's a good idea to lower the pain" she replied.

"Could you please explain?"

"Not much to explain, Eds. We're piercing our ears."

"No, I pierced *my* ear as you watched and now you're thickening out!"

"I'm not, I just waited for Eddie so he could watch."

"I wouldn't want to miss you suffering from pain" Eddie grinned. Richie lay an arm around him and used the other to gesture towards him.

"See, Bevvy? I know him too well."

She smiled. "Okay let's get going then."

Now they were all cramped together in the bathroom. Richie sitting on the closed toilet seat, Beverly kneeling to his left and Eddie sitting on the floor to his right resting his chin and one hand on Richie's leg

and looking up at the scene curiously.

"Okay: three, two..." Beverly said, the needle ready in her hand. Richie instinctively shut his eyes tightly and grabbed Eddie's hand.

"Ouch! That was *not* on three!" Richie exclaimed.

"It's a trick, if I do it on three you might flinch and then I put it in wrongly."

"Oh my god Rich, you really did it" Eddie said with certain awe in his voice that made Richie calm down and feel better.

"Okay, I'm just gonna put in this little silver earring, okay?"

"Yeah."

She did as said and Richie flinched slightly. Then he stood up and walked to the mirror.

"What do you think?" Beverly asked.

He looked at himself from different angles through the mirror and grinned. "I love it."

But it did hurt, so they left the house and sat between the trees near the creek to smoke a joint and distract themselves.

"One day we'll get you a piercing too, babe" Richie said putting an his arm around Eddie.

"Sure, when I'm far away enough from my mother so that she can't strangle me to death anymore."

"Oh, she could probably still do that if you were in an different dimension."

"Oh, for sure!"

They all laughed.

"So, since we're having such a great girl's day, how about painting our nails?"

Both of the boys immediately imagined the other one wearing nail polish and they could not say they were opposed to the idea.

That's unnatural, Mrs Kaspbrak's voice spoke in Eddie's mind the second after.

Boys don't do that. They shouldn't. They're not supposed to.

So what? It would really suit Riche.

But he's a boy!

"Can't say I won't take it off right after, but it does sound fun" Richie said and turned to Eddie, his expression asking for his opinion. The eye contact shut his mother's voice up immediately and he nodded reflexivly.

"Uhm, sure..."

"So it's decided!" Beverly said enthusiastically and took a drag of the

joint and then passed it over to Eddie.

When they had finished it off they went back into Richie's room. He put music on and him and Beverly began painting each others nails as Eddie observed sitting on the bed with his arms around his knees. He was still unsure if he was going to join in. If he was being honest to himself he was a bit sceptical.

"So, babe?" Richie's voice interrupted his train of thought. He looked up at him. "You wanna try?"

"I don't know, Rich..."

"You can take it right off again."

Hesitantly Eddie moved closer to the two and gave Richie his hand mumbling a faint "okay".

"I promise you it will look good!" Richie said blushing and took his hand. As he began painting Eddie's nails Eddie's disapproving expression changed into a shy smile. Every once in a while Richie looked up, their eyes met and they exchanged smiles.

"It does look great!" Beverly said when the job was done.

This is weird. It's not right, something in his gut told him and made him anxious as he looked at the paint on his nails. He wanted to tell the others, but he was not sure how to put his feeling into words. Besides, he was trying very hard to escape his mother's ideals. For Richie. He looked at him with such an enthusiastic grin he could not help but smile back.

"It's... something to get used to." Yes, that was the right formulation.

"Of course, it's new, but it looks good."

Eddie nodded and with that the subject was (thankfully) over.

He took the nail polish off before going home.